Jean Lacouture on Cambodia's Future • Eugene McCarthy on Chrysler

Paul Johnson on Love and Socialism • Raphael Soyer on Edward Hopper

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

January 5 & 12, 1980 Price One Dollar

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The Pope and the Apostate

Martin E. Marty

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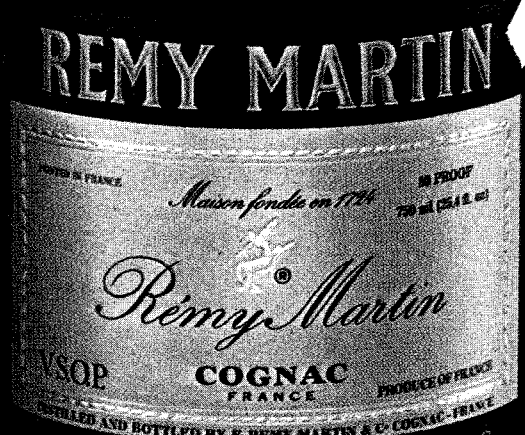

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TRB

from Washington
January 5 & 12, 1980

Gasp

What's it like in Washington now? Breathtaking. Let's begin with President Carter. Crises everywhere. All he has to do is solve the Iranian crisis, the Afghanistan crisis, the oil shortage, the inflation, the recession . . . and get reelected. He looks calm. He invites in small groups of reporters and answers questions off the record with such low-keyed candor that they find themselves, in spite of themselves, feeling protective. It's a neat trick. He is not talking down to them, condescending; he is alarmingly frank and they wonder how much they should tell. They feel themselves picked out of the orchestra and on the stage. Carter is an impressive figure when you have him one-to-one.

Carter looks calm. He looks infuriatingly calm to some. They want action. They want the flag respected. If necessary, they want bombs dropped, troops landed. But the majority of Americans disagree. They don't want him to go stampeding off into heroics. His popularity has increased over Kennedy in one of the most remarkable reversals in the history of poll-taking. It's tough on Kennedy, but that's the advantage an incumbent president has when he "acts presidential."

Last week came a change. It was stunning because of the very restraint previously shown. Carter told Frank Reynolds on ABC TV's "World News Tonight" in effect that Brezhnev had been lying to him. It was no hasty charge; it was careful, premeditated. Carter said he had gotten a "false" response. Twice he said that the Russian action in Afghanistan "has made a more dramatic change in my opinion of what the Soviets' ultimate goals are than anything they've done in the previous time I've been in office."

Carter's persistence has got an 11-0 vote from the UN Security Council ordering Iran to free the American hostages or face sanctions. Defense Secretary Harold Brown is bound for China, while Kurt Waldheim went to Tehran. Special envoy Warren Christopher is coordinating protests in Europe. Moslem protests are going to the Kremlin. In Tehran, where they take turns burning foreign flags, several thousand demonstrators marched to the Soviet Embassy shouting "Death to Russia," and hauled down the Soviet hammer and sickle. This doesn't end the US hostage crisis, of course, but it substantially reduces the earlier fear that lynch mobs of hysterical fanatics would just take out the Americans and slaughter them.

It's hard to see in Washington what the Soviets get out of the present crisis that is worth the cost. Has Moscow blundered? Carter doesn't seem to know. One guesses that it's the cold-blooded treachery of the affair that rouses the mild-mannered president. Moscow has so-called peace and friendship agreements with the smaller nations and it has used such a treaty to go into mountainous Afghanistan, ostensibly to support the communist leader. He apparently welcomed them for the Christmas morning invasion. When they got there he was executed, reportedly with members of his family, and Puppet Number 2 was established. Russia has 50 or 60 million Moslems in its domain. It will take time for this to sink in (and we don't know all the facts yet) but one wonders what resurgent Islam will ultimately think, and what the scowling ayatollah himself will think in his mystic irrationality in the holy city of Qom.

Meanwhile we're due for an election this year and Republicans are understandably irked at being ignored. GOP national chairman Bill Brock charges that Carter's "policy of patience is a policy of deception" and that it only conceals US weakness from the world. It's terribly difficult for Republicans (let alone Teddy Kennedy) to know how to handle this situation: to be patriotic and yet argue Carter is unfit. The Iowa caucus comes in two weeks and after that the interminable process goes on and on. There are 37 primaries this year, starting with New Hampshire, and the effort will be to make people feel guilty for not getting more excited. It's like trying to get people excited every year when baseball teams start spring training. Political reporters get excited by the primaries: it's their job. Four years ago in the Iowa caucus only seven percent of the registered Democrats turned out, and four percent of the Republicans. And yet you can't ignore them. They are important because the press and TV are trying to winnow down the field looking for a front-runner. Carter's slight edge in Iowa in 1976 singled him out; he probably wouldn't be in the White House today without Iowa.

I see a different scenario in all this. I think the developing recession, not world problems, is likely to trap Carter or any other Democratic nominee this fall. The foreign affairs blackout may well keep Teddy from getting the Democratic nomination but after the conventions the voter is going to think about rising prices, declining jobs, and gasoline lines. The GOP, I suspect, is going to have plenty to talk about. Its slogan will be "Throw the incompetents out!" Economists simply don't agree today on what to do about stagflation. The Federal Reserve Board's program amounts to fighting higher prices by increasing unemployment. If it works it means hard times, if it fails it means disaster. In either case the policy is not likely to be popular with voters this autumn. The recession is apt to hit bottom just about election day.

In the meantime, Carter is busy, all right. He canceled his proposed political debate with Kennedy. Front-runners always hate debates and Carter is front-runner now, temporarily at least. The cancellation seemed like a cynical maneuver. But Carter is certainly occupied. There's a telephone call to President Zia of Pakistan and another to President Ziaur of Bangladesh. Carter has dealt with half the world's important heads of states over the Iranian crisis, mostly on a personal basis. Now there's a "hot line" exchange with Brezhnev on Afghanistan. Only Carter, probably, would still be trying to get the doomed SALT II treaty through the Senate. Logically, he urges, it is still to the interest of the US—any treaty to control nuclear arms is to our interest! But who is logical at a time like this?

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

January 5 & 12, 1980

The Limits of Restraint

Issuing dicta from his furious pulpit at Qom, the Ayatollah Khomeini has called on the American people to drive Jimmy Carter out of office. This is only the least of his wishes for our president, and surely the most benign. Has there ever been another target of a priestly anathema who has benefited more handsomely from the attention? Maybe Allah is merciful after all, at least for the moment.

In the ninth week of captivity for the American hostages in Tehran Carter has succeeded in reversing Senator Kennedy's longstanding lead in the public opinion polls. Enough of the people have rallied to Carter for him to feel reasonably confident about his incumbency. This sudden reversal has made him heady and haughty, which is really the only way to read his reneging on the commitment to debate his Democratic rivals in Iowa this week. Carter made that commitment two days *after* the Tehran siege began, suggesting that his change of heart had more to do with political developments than diplomatic ones. Critics of Carter's week-long Mississippi riverboat cruise last summer were told tartly that modern electronics enabled the president to stay in perfect communication with the rest of the world, even in the Midwest. But if anyone doubted that Carter was playing politics with the Iranian crisis when Jody Powell first announced that his boss couldn't leave Washington, there was no doubt after the *Des Moines Register* and *Tribune* offered to move its debate to the nation's capital and, with the consent of Governor Brown and Senator Kennedy, to keep Iran a forbidden topic. Despite the great pretense, Carter has not abjured politics while 50 Americans languish in Tehran—only the politics that is not of his making and to his liking.

So the mullah and the mob have provided Jimmy Carter, vicar of Satan in their eyes, with a smokescreen for all the failures of his presidency: inflation, energy policy, the increasing desperation of the poor, tax reform, an urban housing shortage, declining productivity. This litany is depressing even if one omits the item demonstrated most forcefully by the impasse over the hostages: that the United States, under this administration, has become a fearful mendicant in international affairs. That is precisely how the OPEC countries and the Soviet Union, as interested witnesses to this last and most compelling evidence of American paralysis and timidity, are persuaded we will behave.

It is hard to imagine an American president less deserving of the ayatollah's abuse than Jimmy Carter. Did he not meticulously hold the US apart from the struggle for the shah's succession? Did he not continue to sell arms and spare parts to Shi'a's most belligerent imam even as these comprised the indispensable arsenal for supressing the Kurds and others of Iran's minorities? Were we not, until the last, training bomber pilots who would unload their death loads on these same minorities? These American accommodations were of no avail, despite George Ball's assurances that every Middle East madman can be bribed in the currency of other people's perils to play our game. What Khomeini understood from our deportment in the months after he returned from Paris was that we would be a pushover, both for what he wanted from us concretely (arms, refining capacity, credits) and what he sensed he needed from us symbolically (American humiliation). To that extent, President Carter himself laid the groundwork for the embassy takeover.

Since the November 4 seizure, our policy has been more of the same, and worse. Some of this can be attributed to our stubborn refusal to see clearly with whom we are dealing and of what he is capable. It is as if we can't yet quite conceive that the episode actually has occurred. What was needed, according to this incredulous view, was simply to bring Khomeini around to his senses, for which cure the right dosage would be someone like Ramsey Clark and lots of patience. We still do not seem to grasp that what has emerged in Iran is a charismatic leader, not in the banal sense in which Americans use that term (any good-looking politician who can rouse an audience and just maybe win an election), but in the pure Max Weber meaning of a rare individual imposing his personal will through great masses of people on history itself. Seen in this light, Khomeini is one of the two or three major historical actors since Hitler for whom the ordinary backing and

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filling of diplomacy can be little else but an invitation to more provocative and aggressive action. Even Kurt Waldheim, that very model of a League of Nations diplomat, has been shown, as he tried to leave a wreath at the cemetary for "revolutionary martyrs," that no display of suave impartiality, no matter how farcical, can cool the mob's fever.

Sheer force would not necessarily be any more effective than the present dithering in dealing with a charismatic leader like Khomeini, and with the chiliastic revival of which he is only the most extreme proponent. But the State Department of Secretary Vance and the president who takes its counsel, having forsworn force (possibly rightly but surely too forthrightly), resorted to what apparently is the only alternative they see, which was to indulge their inclination for inaction, in the hope that time and a moderate amount of outrage would win the release of the American hostages.

A prediction: Khomeini may be mad, but he's not that mad: he'll return the hostages sometime, when he needs them no longer, and when he feels he has heaped sufficient indignities on the US. In fact, he may already need them no longer, having demonstrated for the whole world to see exactly how powerless we are or think we are to defend both our citizens abroad and the most rudimentary canons of world order. That is Khomeini's decisive victory, which is already proving in Afghanistan to be one which other adversaries of the US will seek to emulate.

What has been particularly striking during these last two months is the horror the administration seems to have experienced at the thought of the US asserting its interests on its own. Thus, the notion that our government might quickly have persuaded other countries not to trade with Iran by telling them that they couldn't simultaneously trade with Iran and with the US seems to have been dismissed out of hand. That did not prevent us from criticizing Japan when it took advantage of the ambiguities in the situation created by our lack of forthrightness. We should not have expected Tokyo to help an American government that can't help itself.

Even now Carter's warnings that he will inflict gradually heavier costs on a recalcitrant Iran lack credibility. We remain stubbornly reluctant to organize a grain boycott. What a *New York Times* headline called a "triumph for the US"—the decision of the UN Security Council to meet to vote on economic sanctions if the hostages were not released by January 7—is considerably less than a triumph. First off, this particular threat is somewhat deflated by the unnecessary delay in making it. Moreover, it's not clear what is meant by sanctions, though William Sloane Coffin (at last a celebrity again with his homiletic intelligence) was quick to equate economic pressures on Iran with the bombing of North Vietnam. At one point UN ambassador Donald McHenry spoke grandly of a total cutoff of world trade with Iran, but the US delegation has been in awkward retreat ever since. The price of UN support for sanctions may turn out to be sanctions that are ineffective.

The failure of nerve over Iran is related to Carter's timidity in the domestic area. We could not expect our allies and other countries to do without Iranian oil unless we were willing to cut down our own consumption, and then to share with them from our own supplies. This would require what would be sensible anyway for other reasons: gasoline rationing, by tax-and-rebate or by coupon. However much the president has wailed about our dependence on foreign sources, he has refused to take the one critical step that would break the wider captivity of America and the West to the 40 thieves who run OPEC. Which is to say that he has done virtually everything but what will make the oil producers know he is serious.

There are other ways in which our bold rhetoric is undermined by our squeamish actions. The administration has cautioned, for example, that any trial of the hostages will be viewed as an escalation of aggression against the US, and that such proceedings would be considered "illegal and unacceptable" and "a gross violation of international law." Certainly, we said early on, we would not mount defense for our citizens in such a kangaroo court. Latterly, it develops, lawyers have been preparing for just such an eventuality for weeks. The press first reported that this was a private venture. Then we were told that the enterprise was under the patronage of White House counsel Lloyd Cutler, who enlisted colleagues from four fancy law firms—tax attorneys, emissaries of the private sector to the regulatory agencies, experts on wills for the rich, and corporate merger specialists—to bone up on the Shari'a or Moslem law. Now there's a compromise between these two reports: it's not a public undertaking, the White House has coordinated the effort, the administration is not involved. What do the militant students make of these preparations? Will they really believe that they are crossing a red danger line if they bring our personnel to judgment in a trial for which the president's lawyer is mobilizing a defense team?

The Soviet Union evidently has been encouraged by the weakness of the American response in Iran to move in Afghanistan with the kind of crushing force it previously had reserved for the rebellious in the Warsaw bloc: Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, those Eastern European countries that have experienced the full measure of Soviet brutality. Following the Moscow-sponsored coup in Kabul, and the movement of tens of thousands of Russian troops across the Afghani border, the Carter administration has threatened—as usual—grave penalties and retaliation. Now what?

Carter's first concrete action was to shelve the SALT treaty, which hurts us as much as it will the Russians. If Carter had threatened to do this many months ago, he might not have had to go through with it now. Since it is obvious to everybody, including the Russians, that

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Correspondence

Representation by class

To the editors:

How many members of the House of Representatives live in "The Other Washington" (Washington Diarist, December 15, 1979)?

Remember, the House of Representatives was to be "the depository of democracy," with members that "sympathize with their constituents, think as they think, feel as they feel, and . . . should be in residence among them."

Perhaps the only way to restore this vision of democracy would be to replace district representation with financial class representation, so that representatives would have close to the same income, same housing, same everyday financial problems of their constituents: the poor represented by the poor, middle income by middle income, wealthy by wealthy, etc. The poor would campaign against the poor, etc., etc. Perhaps five income classes per state with the representative's legislative power being in proportion to his state's population. Such representation is now practical, whereas it may not have been in the past.

Perhaps such representation would help make our democracy believable, improve our dialogue with the third world, restore faith in Congress, and hope in "the other side of Washington."

Richard Hunter
Willoughby, Ohio

Cruel chemotherapy

To the editor:

M.E.K. is too cute for words, but he wouldn't be as funny if he knew more about modern cancer therapy (Washington Diarist, *TNR*, December 22, 1979). Very probably Chad Green died of cancer—in relative peace and dignity. Under the tender care of the state and its good doctors, he might have been kept alive—in torment—for days, weeks, months, before he died of cancer, if the therapy didn't happen to kill him first.

Laetrile probably has no effect on cancer, but the dietary regime that usually goes with it at least tends to build up the patient so he is better able to bear the disease that is destined to kill him. Conventional treatments wear him down; the hope is that all cancer cells will die before the patient is fatally poisoned. Sometimes they are; but these therapies are too often applied when even the doctor knows that the hope is too thin, that the cancer is unlikely to be killed before the patient.

The statement, "The cruelest revenge on the shah would be further medical care" is funny only to those who don't know it may be true.

George Brewster
Bozeman, Montana

Inflaming black-Jewish relations

To the editors:

Of all the works written on blacks by non-blacks in the last 20-odd years, Charles Silberman's *Crisis in Black and White* was probably the most sensitive, perceptive, and insightful. Thus I waited and read with great alacrity his article announced to be on "Blacks and Jews" (*TNR*, December 22, 1979) but published "Jesse and the Jews" (*TNR*, December 29, 1979). Although the later title is misleading—if not mischievous—Silberman has not lost much of his sensitivity, perceptiveness, and insightfulness about blacks . . . only some of it. Moreover, Silberman unfortunately overstates blacks' anti-Semitism and understates their disappointment with many Jews' and their organizations' attacks on affirmative action.

Blacks are no more entirely immune to this country's history of anti-Semitism than Jews are immune to racism or hostility toward blacks. Yet both groups share and understand a common suffering which makes them wary of either anti-Semitism or racism. I doubt very much that "political anti-Semitism . . . is now a central part of the ideology of the left," but I know it has been turned to "for temporary advantage" by very few, if any, blacks. That national black leaders may appear more anti-Semitic than their followers reflects no more than their greater understanding of the deleterious consequences to blacks of some Jewish opposition to affirmative action. Black leaders and their followers have put jobs at the top of their agenda. Surely Silberman knows that much of the opposition to affirmative action (a mechanism for getting blacks more and better jobs) which is claimed to be based upon hatred of *numerous clausus* really conceals a general and pervasive (although less intense) hatred of blacks.

It will be tragic for both blacks and Jews if black deviation from Zionism is translated into an expression of political anti-Semitism. Baiting Jesse Jackson and shouting anti-Semitism at black leaders is sticking one's head in a tiger's mouth and inflaming black-Jewish relations.

Kenneth S. Tollett, Director
Institute for the Study of Educational Policy
Howard University
Washington, DC

Humboldt's Schwartz

To the editors:

It is *not* Charles Citrine who is "obviously" Delmore Schwartz in Saul Bellow's *Humboldt's Gift* (Washington Diarist, *TNR*, December 29, 1979). The Schwartz character is, of course, Von Humboldt Fleisher, Bellow's "poet, thinker, problem drinker, pill-taker, man of genius, manic depressive, intricate schemer."

Peter Goldsmith
Buffalo, New York

A united Ireland

To the editors:

Richard Clutterbuck's one-sided presentation of the British view of the Irish situation ("Ireland's American Enemies," *TNR*, December 15) shows Britain as a benevolent mediator in the conflict. But the insidious part Britain plays in the role of divider in Ireland is not mentioned.

The *cause sine qua non* of the Irish conflict is Britain's presence in Ireland. It is apodictic that while Britain is in Ireland there will not be a settlement of the division between the two peoples who live there. The problem will continue to fester, with killings and disorders, with no end in sight but final chaos. By having Britain remain in Ireland, this is the future that both Mr. Clutterbuck and Britain have fated for the Irish people in the North.

The Irish side of the issue is that the Irish fight for independence is a continuous one through 1798, the United Irishmen, Young Ireland, the Fenians, Home Rule, Parnell, the Revolution of 1916, to the Republic of Ireland, and that these are all national movements for freedom, having no religious connotations. The motivation is independence from Britain—nothing more, nothing less. Until independence is realized, this impulse will not rest.

The feasible and constructive solution to the Irish problem is for Britain to

(continued on page 39)

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the treaty is doomed anyway now in the Senate, Carter's ceremonial withdrawal of it will not have much impact on Soviet calculations.

So what else? Should we embargo our grain? Should we boycott the Moscow Olympics? Cut off sales of computers and other advanced technology that support the Soviet war machine? All such escalations carry great costs and risks. As with the SALT treaty, Carter's own past policy of benign toleration is what makes a frenzied reversal of that policy so likely now. And yet if we don't take these steps, or at least any one or two of these or other comparable steps, what will Brezhnev understand by Carter's brave words? We should not want him to think he lives in a world without risk. Our most important long-range action should be to establish a credible military presence in the Middle East, proving our commitment to our friends and to our oil supplies.

Our allies doubtless watch this spectacle of American impotence with great foreboding. It's not altogether incredible to think that Russian troops will take up posts in Iranian Kurdistan and Turkistan, across the frontiers from Soviet Kurdistan and Soviet Turkistan, much as they did in 1907 and again in 1941. And what exactly would President Carter do then? The president's partisans and the establishment press have been congratulating the administration on its restraint. But restraint is not its own reward, and it is wise statesmanship only when it is appropriate to the provocations and if it succeeds. The provocations right now are too great for the kind of self-abnegating restraint that shows no promise but that of failing.

White House Watch

How Things Happen

Toward midday Friday, December 28, two hours after he had cut short a holiday stay at Camp David and choppered back to the White House, President Carter had the following problems on his plate. The Russians were moving into Afghanistan. They were installing the third of three pro-Soviet regimes since April 1978, murdering the previous Soviet stooge and his family, and beginning to deploy thousands of Soviet troops throughout a country where anti-Soviet and anti-foreign Moslem rebels abounded and from which Soviet power could be extended through Iran and Pakistan to the Persian Gulf with enormous impact upon US interests in that area. The several dispersed "authorities" in Iran were still holding American hostages (53?—nobody quite knew the number) at the US Embassy and at the foreign ministry in Tehran, driving Carter to distraction, and enjoying the combined inability and reluctance of the US and its queasy friends at the UN and around the world to do much about it. The President was about to appear in the White House press room, denounce the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan, and tie it to his Iranian problem in the hope that the Soviet Union's historic enemies in Iran would be aroused and the world would be awakened to looming dangers that, as he would soon acknowledge, Carter was just awaking to.

At the midday moment cited at the start of this report, however, a domestic question was on the President's mind. It had been plaguing him acutely for several days and in lesser degree for several weeks. The question was whether he should withdraw from a nationally televised debate with his only serious rivals for the 1980 Democratic nomination, Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and Governor Jerry Brown of California. Carter found on his White House desk a memo from one of his senior domestic advisers, urging him to stay in the debate. He'd already had the same advice, orally and in writing, from that adviser and several others. Around noon of Friday he blew his top. With unusual acerbity he said to assistants within hearing that he'd made up his mind, he'd heard all the talk and read all the memos he cared to hear and read on the subject. So . . . *shut up.*

In a telegram late that afternoon and in a telephoned apologia to James Gannon, the executive editor of the *Des Moines Register* and *Tribune*, the President recalled that he had enthusiastically accepted the invitation to debate in Des Moines when Gannon suggested it last fall. Carter was trailing Senator Kennedy (not then an announced candidate) in the polls. Carter told Gannon by telegram and telephone that he was terribly sorry, he really wanted to debate, withdrawing probably would be politically costly to him in Iowa and elsewhere. But the Iranian and now the Afghanistan problems required his undivided attention and his presence in or near Washington. It occurred to Gannon, and the *Register* suggested in a news story and a subsequent editorial, that since the takeover of the Tehran embassy Carter had jumped in the polls from way behind to way ahead of Kennedy, and that maybe the motive for withdrawal was more political than international. It's a whiskered rule of politics, not always observed, that leaders avoid and trailers welcome debates of the kind that Carter had welcomed and now ducked. The handling and publicizing of the withdrawal at the White House encouraged that impression. It was widely accepted among White House reporters and columnists even before the withdrawal was confirmed. The notion that Carter, his disclaimers notwithstanding, found it politically advantageous to withdraw is at least defensible. The accompanying notion that the whole story of controversy between his political and foreign policy advisers was manufactured in order to sustain and maximize the impression of non-political above-the-battle reasoning is not defensible. It

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simply does not stand up very well to detailed reporting of what went on before the withdrawal.

Ever since Carter began bowing out of political engagements and trips in November, with the plea that he had to stay atop the Iranian mess, his own people and outsiders had speculated that he might pull out of the Des Moines debate. Nobody really believed he would, though, until very recently. I didn't believe he would, right up to the Friday announcement, although he had indicated a possibility that he might withdraw in an interview at the White House with *Register* editors and reporters on December 20. Their printed accounts of the interview suggested that the *Register* editors didn't take the indication seriously.

Friday, December 28, the day of Carter's return from Camp David to grapple with the invasion of Afghanistan and the persisting Iranian crisis, the *New York Times* reported that Carter's political advisers were urging him to stay in the Des Moines debate and foreign policy advisers were urging him to pull out. That afternoon Jack Nelson, chief Washington correspondent of the *Los Angeles Times*, told Press Secretary Jody Powell by telephone that he was reporting in Saturday's *Times* and on a Washington television program that night that Carter was pulling out and he, Nelson, wanted the whole story. Powell invited him to the White House and gave him a copy of a memorandum to Carter that Powell had composed while staying with the Carters at Camp David earlier that week. Nelson showed and mentioned the memo on television and quoted it at length in the *Times*. Haynes Johnson, a *Washington Post* columnist and participant on the television program, cracked that it sounded to him like a planted leak. "When I get it, it's an exclusive," Nelson retorted. "When you get it, it's a leak." Powell said in the memo that Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski were urging Carter to withdraw. Powell said that he, staff chief Hamilton Jordan, campaign chairman Robert Strauss, campaign director Tim Kraft, and domestic policy adviser Stuart Eizenstat believed he should stay with the debate. "A debate in this format," Powell wrote, "places you in the strongest position and EMK in the weakest. . . . Since there is little chance that you will be able to personally campaign in Iowa, the debate is your chance to have a personal impact before the first round of [Iowa] caucuses. . . . If you do not participate in the debate, it will be very difficult for you to do any campaigning until this crisis is over. That could be longer than any of us would like to think." Nelson's copy had Carter's handwritten reaction scrawled on it: "I can't disagree with any of this, but I cannot break away from my duties here, which are extraordinary now and ones which only I can fulfill. We will just have to take the adverse political consequencies. . . ." (Carter's spelling.)

Powell had two or three telephone conversations with Gannon in Des Moines late Friday. Powell later put it about that Gannon had asked and Powell had promised a delay in the announcement of the withdrawal until after that evening's TV news shows. Gannon remembers that he didn't care all that much, declined Powell's offer to withhold the announcement until the next morning, and said he would welcome withholding it long enough to notify Kennedy and Brown that evening before the official news was out. The first firm word in Washington that Carter had pulled out came from indignant Senator Kennedy's office, to the *New York Times*. Its Saturday morning story made the front page. David Broder, the *Washington Post*'s distinguished political reporter and commentator, got Powell to confirm Nelson's story, including the Carter quotation, in time to squeeze a short piece inside the Saturday paper. At one of his increasingly frequent informal seances in his office with White House reporters who'd hung around the White House that evening, Powell quoted from the memo, leaving out the Carter response, but didn't hand out any copies. He later authorized his principal deputy, special assistant Ray Jenkins, to give out a few copies. It was Sunday morning before the general press caught up with Jack Nelson's full story.

Powell's language in the memo suggests, and talks with participants whom he did and did not name in it demonstrate, that there really was a serious argument among serious people over whether to stay in or withdraw. It's assumed that Rosalynn Carter, who was with her Jimmy at Camp David during the crux of the argument the last week of December, took part. All she lets her spokeswoman, Mary Hoyt, say, is that she fully supports the President's decision. Powell had direct word only from Brzezinski that he and other foreign policy advisers, Vance included, urged Carter to withdraw. Brzezinski certainly did. It was in character for Vance to be for withdrawal. But he never considered it enough of an issue to mention it to his chief spokesman, Hodding Carter III, who says he never heard it discussed as a serious matter at the department. Eizenstat and Strauss affirm that they viewed the question as seriously as Powell says in his memo they did. Strauss communicated mainly through Jordan and Eizenstat. Jordan was with his family in South Georgia at the height of the argument, but he participated daily and fully in it and other matters by conference and individual telephone calls. Anne Wexler, unmentioned by Powell, was a touch iffy about it but finally came down against withdrawal. Sarah Weddington, the other woman on Carter's senior political staff, was in on the original decision to participate, but not the final argument, and was glad to be out of it. Cabinet secretary and presidential personnel selector Jack Watson didn't get terribly excited about it, but he was against withdrawal. The only senior assistant who is considered to be on the domestic side and advocated withdrawal was staff director Alonzo McDonald, Jordan's deputy and the President's efficiency zealot. He argued in essence that

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there were better and less risky uses for the President's time and energies.

Vice President Mondale sided with the opponents of withdrawal, and thereby hangs an interesting point. The official answer from him through assistants was that his advice to the President on this and all other matters is confidential and he's not about to break the tradition of confidentiality. Jody Powell's publication of his memo to Carter smashed that tradition into small pieces. Nobody at the White House seemed to give a damn. Since Franklin Roosevelt's time, to my knowledge, it's usually been possible to find out how senior advisers to Presidents feel about this or that and to assume with adequate assurance that they conveyed their view to the President. But the tradition, of course subject to departure, has been that presidential assistants just don't say as much in so many words. After Jody Powell's performance, Carter's assistants will have a hard time pleading confidentiality. That's good for my business, bad for the country.

John Osborne

What are Vietnam's plans for the country it holds prisoner?

Cambodia the Hostage

Cambodia is now a Vietnamese possession. As costly, as dangerous, and even as incomplete as this "possession" may be, it is a fact. Vietnam possesses Cambodia even though this may not have been sought as an end in itself, a definitive solution to the whole range of problems involving the two countries, but simply as a "means" and interim step. In every political and strategic contest, the possession of a "hostage" is crucial, as Frederick II and Napoleon, among others, understood. Those who supported the Vietnamese in their struggle against French colonialism and American intervention may be astonished to find Ho Chi Minh's successors choosing such mentors. But Lenin followed their counsel, and that of Clausewitz as well.

Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia is different from England's occupation of Iraq, for example, or France's of Morocco, both of which were limited both in duration and objectives. The occupation of Cambodia is one episode in a very long history which joins the two peoples and also sets them at odds. It often has taken the form of an animalistic, biological struggle of the sort for which we would look to Konrad Lorenz for an explanation, rather than to Raymond Aron.

Prince Sihanouk once referred to the Vietnamese as "swallowers" of Khmer lands. But for more than six centuries, from 900 to 1500 A.D., it was the Cambodians who devoured and digested the land and people of South Vietnam. In the ideology of the Khmers Rouges, southern Vietnam, or at least the Mekong Delta and the territory west of the river, belong to the Khmer nation. This explains the depth and violence of the enmity, and the fear that the Vietnamese occupation is much more than a temporary conquest, a response to the insults and provocations of Pol Pot, or simply a move to save Vietnam from having to struggle against two Chinas, one to the north and one to the southwest. The fear is that this is the beginning of an attempt to absorb Cambodia, to integrate into Vietnam its land and whatever Nixon's bombers, Pol Pot's assassins, and Vietnam's tanks have left of its people.

The most pressing problem in Cambodia today is the material survival of a people who have been almost as persecuted by history for the past 10 years as the Jews of Europe were between 1933 and 1945. Their survival depends not only on international solidarity—which now seems to be taking a more serious and practical form—but also on the basic intentions of the leaders in Hanoi, whom Moscow seems to be allowing a broad latitude for action.

What do the Vietnamese want? Do they have a master plan? Have they taken Cambodia hostage in order to negotiate with both China and the West a system of Indochinese security that recognizes Vietnam's sphere of influence? Do they aspire to neutralize their two neighbors, Laos and Cambodia? Do they wish to make Cambodia a protectorate as they have Laos? Do they want to be rid of this bothersome people once and for all, to remove them to "reservations" and redistribute the rich lands of Cambodia to the poor peasants of central Vietnam?

Let us consider the final hypothesis. It is advanced by several friends of the Cambodian people, like Father Ponchaud, author of *Cambodia: Year Zero* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston). Ponchaud contends that the policies of the present occupiers, as they limit international aid, distribute food by political criteria, and forbid certain harvests, constitute a "subtle genocide" substituted for the brutal genocide of the Khmers Rouges. But another churchman, the Protestant pastor Clavaud, recently assured a delegation of various church representatives at Phnom Penh that this is too pessimistic. He stated that during several months of traveling throughout Cambodia he had seen no trace of Vietnamese colonists, even east of the Mekong. The US ambassador to Thailand, Morton Abramowitz, also has said that there is no proof that the Vietnamese are committing "subtle genocide."

What then do they want? Neither Ho Chi Minh's testament (to which one hears frequent references by those who haven't read it) nor recent official Vietnamese documents indicate that Hanoi has decided to include Cambodia and Laos in an Indochinese federation that would reincarnate the former French colonial arrangement. Maybe a kind of Common Market

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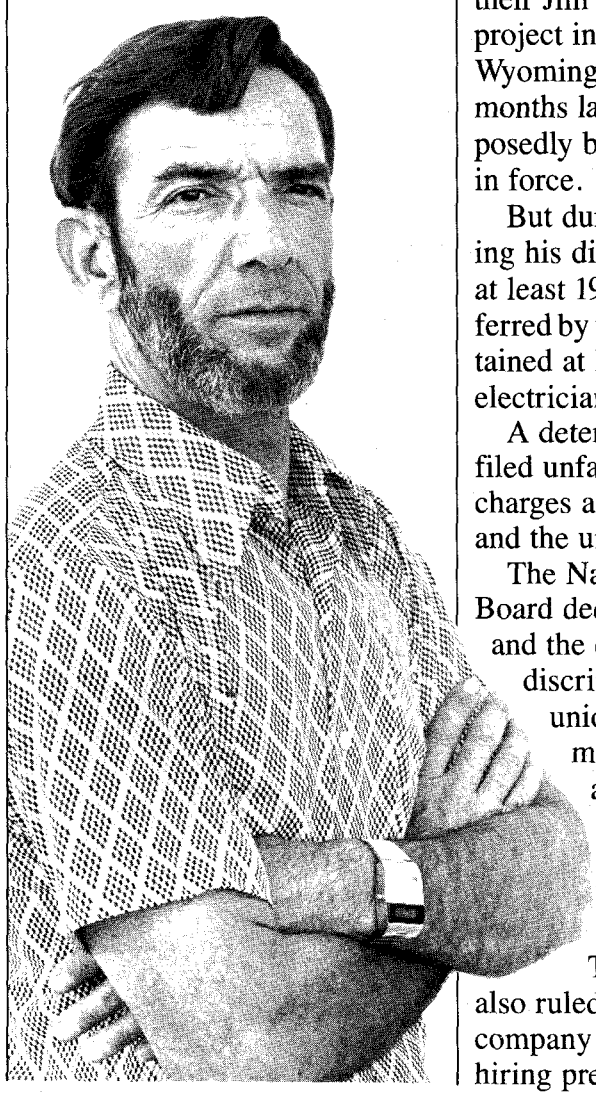
Job Discrimination... It Still Exists.

Paul Robertson is not a member of a persecuted minority. But he has experienced blatant discrimination all the same because he has chosen not to join a union.

Paul Robertson is a working man, a skilled licensed electrician with more than 20 years experience. He found out the hard way how a big company and a big union can discriminate on the job.



Paul was hired by the Bechtel Power Corporation to work on their Jim Bridger Power Plant project in the Rock Springs, Wyoming area. Only three months later, he was fired, supposedly because of a reduction in force.

But during the week preceding his discharge, Bechtel hired at least 19 union electricians referred by the local union and retained at least 65 unlicensed electricians.

A determined Paul Robertson filed unfair labor practice charges against the company and the union.

The National Labor Relations Board declared that the union and the employer had illegally discriminated in hiring only union members for permanent jobs. Robertson and the other nonunion electricians were ordered reinstated to their jobs with back pay.

The NLRB, however, also ruled that the union and the company could continue to give hiring preference to workers with seniority in unionized jobs. The ruling threatened nonunion workers.

Paul Robertson didn't give up. With the help of the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, he appealed the Board ruling to the U.S. Court of Appeals, arguing that any hiring hall favoritism should be unlawful. Finally, in May of 1979, the Appeals Court handed him a clear victory, reversing the NLRB.

Paul Robertson was fortunate. He found experienced legal help—all important because the case dragged on for four years before the Appeals Court finally forced the union to heed the law.

The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation is helping everyone it can—currently in more than 100 cases involving academic and political freedom, protection from union violence, and other fundamental rights. But it would like to do even more.

If you'd like to help workers like Paul Robertson write:

The National Right to Work
Legal Defense Foundation
8316 Arlington Boulevard
Suite 600
Fairfax, Virginia 22038

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governed by common agencies of the three nations' Communist parties (excluding Pol Pot, of course) would best serve Vietnamese interests. It could organize the distribution of products, the assignment of manpower, monetary harmonization, and the regulation of exchanges. While this federalist project may not be explicit in the Vietnamese plans, it belongs to what we can call Hanoi's implicit strategy.

We must not forget that the party founded by Ho Chi Minh in 1930 was called for a few months the *Vietnamese* Communist party, but very soon became the *Indochinese* Communist party at the demand of the Soviets, who preferred the convenient colonial framework and didn't trust nationalist impulses within Asiatic Communist parties. Ho Chi Minh and his companions existed mentally, politically, and materially within this context. It informed their habits of thinking and decision making. They are instinctively attuned to the notion of "Indochinese" without the need for any further distinctions. They have been accustomed to reasoning in this way for a long time, and to making decisions in the name of the Indochinese revolution, which includes the Vietnamese revolution. It is easy to understand the outrage and bitterness of the Cambodians when confronted with the present Vietnamese attempt to establish hegemony.

The Vietnamese believe that the affairs of the region can only be entrusted to themselves, the only serious and capable inhabitants of the area. Respect for the sovereignty of the neighboring countries never will be more than a formality. They alone, they believe, are capable of developing the area; and, they further believe, it is in the best interests of the Khmer people, as well as of the Laotians, to let them take care of things. Their superiority complex, full of solicitude, is reminiscent of the English and French colonialists of the last century who found it inconceivable to entrust any serious tasks to the "natives." The Vietnamese leaders think the same way.

Another historical factor pushes the Vietnamese in the same direction; it is the specter of Chinese imperialism. Because they do not consider their neighbors capable of serious opposition to Chinese infiltration (or of becoming anything more than satellites of Peking), the leaders in Hanoi took over the two ancient kingdoms: Laos, to prevent the Chinese from coming in; Cambodia, to put an end to Chinese domination. One of the factors that may prolong the military occupation of Cambodia is the conviction of Ho Chi Minh's heirs that, once the Vietnamese army has left, nothing will prevent the return of the Chinese puppets, whether Khmers Rouges or anticommunist forces armed by Peking, like those that now follow Son Sann.

The Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia is based not on short-term strategic objectives, but on a total permanent cultural system, a mechanism of collective thought. This does not mean that there is no hope of seeing Cambodia some day regain some kind of sovereignty, centered on an organization or a personality (Sihanouk?) that rejects any kind of collusion with Pol Pot. Clearly this is the basic precondition of any negotiations with the Vietnamese.

The experience of recent months has not done much to encourage such hopes. The mere allusion to a "political solution" has been denounced by the spokesmen of Hanoi as "inspired by imperialism." Such a reference was enough to discredit Heng Samrin and to have Hanoi treat him as an "agent of the CIA." (Heng Samrin is a former Khmer Rouge leader who was recruited by Hanoi after its failure to obtain the cooperation of Prince Sihanouk, whom they had intended to free from house arrest in Phnom Penh, transport by helicopter to Vietnam, and make the head of the December 1978 "uprising.") We know how the Hanoi Politburo reacted to Sihanouk's letters of last September and October aimed at opening negotiations. The Vietnam leaders didn't even open them: the last one was returned to him still sealed. Bully tactics! But such attitudes may eventually be revised under the pressure of circumstances.

Hanoi holds Cambodia hostage. But it is expensive. Until the Khmer economy can be revived—and it will take years to find managers, equipment, and even workers in good health—no amount of confiscated international aid can support the 150,000-man Vietnamese army. Vietnam itself is in economic ruin; it has to support a large army in the north facing China and it is drained in the south by sabotage and corruption. Will the Soviets pay the costs? And for how long? And at the price of what concessions, what infringements on the sovereignty of the proud Vietnamese?

The cost of the Cambodian operation is not only material; it is also moral and political. The terrible diplomatic defeat of Vietnam and the Soviet camp by the US last November 14 (93 votes to 23 in the United Nations demanding the evacuation of Cambodia) must make the Vietnamese and Soviet realists pause for thought. Morally scandalous but politically eloquent, the fact that the Pol Pot regime is retained as the Cambodian representative to the United Nations is another alarm for Hanoi and Moscow. This is not to mention the disagreements within the communist world; the French Communists, once again more soviet than the Soviets, support the occupation of Cambodia, but the Spanish leader Carillo condemns it, as do the Romanians, the Yugoslavs, and the North Koreans, while the Italian party is divided on the subject.

Must we believe that the leaders of Hanoi have accepted the idea of living forever alongside a hostile China, which certainly will be the case as long as Hanoi militarily occupies the Khmer country? Can we really think that they have rejected the idea of normalization of their relations with Washington once and for all, considering all the economic advantages such normalization would bring, to be quickly followed by detente with all the member states of SEATO?

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How far can the successors of Ho Chi Minh go in exchange for guaranteed borders on the north and the opening of positive relations with the US and its Asian allies? Would they settle for the neutralization of Cambodia? "Finlandization," as recently suggested by a high-ranking American diplomat? A relationship like that between Romania and the USSR: apparent economic independence combined with real military control? Or, more modestly for Cambodia, a merely formal autonomy like that with which Czechoslovakia must content itself? This was the future foreseen for his country by Prince Sihanouk in an article published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1970, one the eve of his overthrow.

For the moment, none of these solutions is in sight for unfortunate Cambodia, a prisoner whose food is delivered only through its prison bars. Hostage? It is the definition of a hostage to be a coin of exchange. Those who want to see Cambodia survive must find items for their side of the exchange.

Jean Lacouture

Jean Lacouture is a French intellectual who has written several books about Indochina including a biography of Ho Chi Minh. This article was translated from the French by Leonard Mayhew.

Is the Chrysler loan good for General Motors?

Chrysler and Country

If Karl Marx had known about the automobile, or anticipated the automobile culture of America, he might well have amended his theories in order to assert that the capitalistic system needs either war *or* the automobile industry (or both) to stimulate economic growth. There are clear points of similarity between the two as economic forces. They use essentially the same materials, principally fuel and metals. They both demand great supplies of manpower and a concentration of technological effort. Both consume great amounts of money and of credit. Total automobile credit outstanding in the US at the end of 1978 was more than $88 billion. The defense budget of the federal government for that year was about $100 billion and the federal budget deficit was about $49 billion.

There is also a disturbing similarity between the two, when defense expenditures support actual war, in their common propensity to maim and to kill people. During the months of high casualties in Vietnam, defenders of the war occasionally pointed out that more people had been killed in automobile accidents at home than had been killed in the war during the same period of time.

Marx noted that an extended and expensive war might eventually have a depressing and destructive effect on a capitalistic system. Obviously today the combined cost of maintaining a large military establishment, which is not only unproductive in economic terms but positively wasteful, and an excessively large and wasteful automobile culture, is too much for the American economy to carry. We can no longer afford both our defense establishment and our automobile culture. What can be done about the first is a matter of politics. What can be done about the second is a matter of both politics and economics. According to a Hertz Corporation study published last summer, Americans are spending approximately $445 billion a year, more than one fourth of national personal income, on automobiles. Making up five percent of the world's population, we own almost one half of all passenger cars in the world, with one car for every 1.8 Americans. About 15 percent of the world's annual production of petroleum is used each year to fuel American cars.

We have more cars and trucks than we need. We have a greater variety of cars than is necessary to satisfy reasonable consumer needs. Before World War II, making a choice of a car was relatively simple. Most cars had less than 100-horsepower engines. There were only four or five models in each line. The models usually were called simply sedans, coaches, coupes. Now there are at least nine different kinds of Chevrolets. You could, if sufficiently agitated by the advertisements, spend a whole lifetime driving a Chevrolet and never be sure that you had the right kind.

Beyond makes and models, size and power, there are the special names of cars to be weighed before purchase. A prospective driver must consider his image, and ask questions such as: What is my totem animal? Am I a cougar, a pinto, a rabbit, a skylark, or a sky hawk? Or if one is into prestigous locales and watering spots, do I want to imagine myself in Capri, in Malibu, in Aspen, Versailles, or Monte Carlo? No company is offering a Coney Island or an Atlantic City. For those interested in astronomy there is the modest choice of Nova, Vega, Comet, and Electra; and for those of tough fiber, there are the Matador, the Cutlass, the Maverick, the Renegade.

The Japanese manufacturers have stayed mostly with company names so far. We may expect, though, that in an early series, they will be offering, under the urging of American advertising consultants, samurais, kamikazes, hara-kiris, etc.

Our cars are too large and too heavy. Most are overpowered. With a national speed limit set at 55 miles an hour, auto manufacturers provide speedometers that will give readings from 50 percent to 100 percent higher than the legal limit, and provide engines capable of propelling the car beyond the speed limit in comparable measure. It has been suggested that even if the engines and their power were adjusted to keep them within the legal range, the speedometers could

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remain the same. The last 50 miles on the speedometer could be like President Carter's lust: only for the imagination. Obviously our automobiles consume too much fuel. They pollute too much. They kill and maim too many people. With no significant change in lifestyle, but simply by driving cars of reasonable power and size, we could save as much as $100 billion a year in transportation costs.

In the midst of all of this, the government has been asked to guarantee a loan of $1.6 billion for the failing Chrysler Corporation. Both Houses of the Congress, the House of Representatives and the Senate, have responded positively to the request, supported by the Carter administration. Congressional debate on the proposal never got much beyond consideration of the narrow and immediate issues of loss of jobs, and of effects on communities, especially Detroit, which have Chrysler installations. The broader issues of the automobile and of American culture were never seriously discussed, nor was the more limited question of the condition of the automobile industry itself.

If these issues had been raised, the whole discussion might have used as its controlling text and rule of action that most remembered utterance of Charlie Wilson, secretary of defense in the Eisenhower administration, following his career as president of General Motors. Wilson said, "I thought what was good for our country was good for General Motors, and vice-versa." What Charlie Wilson would have said about the loan can only be guessed at, but if he had applied his 1950 judgment about the common and inseparable interests of the United States and of General Motors, he might well have reasoned as follows.

First, that the loan to Chrysler will not be good for the country because it will keep an inefficient producer in operation. On the other hand, it will be good for General Motors since the loan, by keeping the inefficient Chrysler company in business, will make it possible for General Motors to make profits and control the American automobile market without great difficulty, and without attracting too much attention from the antitrust people. This conclusion would not have wholly satisfied the demands of his principle.

Charlie might then have moved on to consider the effect of offering the loan guarantee to Ford Motors Company instead. Ford reports that it is losing a billion dollars a year on its car and truck production and sales in the United States and Canada. A loan guarantee for Ford would make Ford more competitive with General Motors, which would be good for the country, thus meeting one half of Wilson's standard of public good. But it would not be good for General Motors, thus failing to meet the requirements of the other half of the Wilson rule.

Charlie might then have concluded that the best arrangement of all would be to provide help neither to Chrysler nor to Ford, but to General Motors, to help move that company to produce the kinds of cars that the country needs and should have, and also to make General Motors more competitive with foreign automobile manufacturers who are taking over more and more of the American automobile industry and the American automobile market.

Old "Engine Charlie" may well have spoken with the voice of a prophet 20 years ago. What would be good for General Motors could be good for the country and "vice-versa."

Eugene McCarthy

Eugene McCarthy is the former senator from Minnesota.

Seven more lean years.

The Book of OPEC

"And all countries came into Egypt by Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands" (Genesis 41). The United States and the West are in the middle of reliving the Old Testament story of Joseph and Pharaoh. Joseph, during the seven fat years, acquired all the world's corn into Pharaoh's storehouses. He "gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number." Then came the famine and the beginning of the seven lean years. All the world came to Joseph for food. And he was willing to sell—at a price.

During the past six years, as the oil has flowed out, about $800 billion has flowed into OPEC treasuries. The $800 billion is practically pure profit; it costs about 47 cents to get a barrel of oil out of the ground and to a tanker at Jeddah where it is sold for $23. In 1973 the price of a barrel of light Saudi crude was $2.10. The oil gouge is simply a tax by them on us. This historic transfer of wealth has taken place without the firing of a shot, or even, as far as we know, the pounding of a table.

When Joseph opened his store, "there was no bread in all the land": the Egyptians were starving. Would he sell them corn for money? Joseph was happy to. He "gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt . . . and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house." Joseph did not say he would "recycle" the money. He just kept it. In the modern version of the Joseph story what is meant by "recycling" never really has been made clear to the American people. Somehow the money is supposed to come back to us, but beyond that it is a little vague.

In fact it is a shell game. The Arabs made deposits with US banks. In turn, the US banks promised to make loans—$48.7 billion so far—to needy poor countries which do not produce oil ("less developed countries" or "LDCs" in the jargon). The LDCs need all that money

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to pay their oil bills. Of course the Arabs could have directly loaned money to the LDCs to finance the oil purchases. But then they would have had Zaire and Peru as their debtors. The Arabs preferred to have David Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan Bank as their debtor.

The banks thought there was a buck in it—the figures were huge—and took on the role of middleman. As a result, they are exposed both ways—the LDCs may collapse or the Arabs may pull out their short-term deposits, and each danger enhances the other. As Minos Zombanakis, chairman of INA International Holdings Ltd., puts it, "The big banks and the poor countries have become so interdependent that you do not know whether the banks will eventually bring about the collapse of the countries or if countries will trigger off the collapse of banks." To add to the excitement, most of the LDC debt is coming due during the next year. The list of poor countries asking for a "rescheduling" of their loans is rapidly increasing. Plainly the LDCs, faced with even larger oil bills in the next year, will default unless the banks renew the IOUs. In truth they should be written off as bad debts. The likelihood of LDC defaults weakening the banks makes the Arab threat to pull out their money all the more devastating. OPEC deposits in US banks (and their foreign subsidiaries) amount to $32 billion. The withdrawal of the deposits would surely bust the banks. The threat to do so gives the OPEC depositors effective working control of the US banking system.

Joseph collected the money until there was no more—"money failed in the land." The Eygptians "came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence." Joseph said, I will give you bread for your cattle. "And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses."

OPEC has collected a cattle company in Arizona; islands in South Carolina; an investment firm in New York City (Donaldson, Lufkin and Jenrette); shopping centers in Maryland; banks in Georgia (Bert Lance's National Bank of Georgia); the Houston Galleria in Texas; a yarn mill in New Hampshire; and, all over the United States, office buildings, apartment houses (posh areas of town are popular with the Arabs), and lots of land. The General Accounting Office reports that OPEC owns $3.9 billion of stock in American corporations and $3.6 billion in bonds.

Since OPEC can and does conceal its ownership by using nominees or strawmen, the official figures are only the tip of the iceberg. OPEC only discloses its interest when it wants to. Total OPEC investment in the US, according to the official figures, is $52 billion. In fact, it is more. Some experts think Saudi Arabia alone may have that much.

Also, like a threatened miser, the government doesn't want to show the facts it does have. The House Subcommittee on Commerce and Monetary Affairs has been denied important data. It would like to know which particular OPEC countries have deposits in which particular US banks. The public would then know if Walter Wriston of Citibank or David Rockefeller of Chase is more likely to be a mouthpiece for oil—or whether they are equally likely. Now the only figures released are for OPEC as a whole and no particular US banks are mentioned.

This omission results from a 1974 deal between William Simon, then secretary of the Treasury, and the government of Saudi Arabia. Simon promised confidentiality for the bank deposits if the Saudis would buy a good chunk of the US national debt he was trying to unload. As the GAO reports: "Treasury made special commitments of financial confidentiality to Saudi Arabia and perhaps other OPEC governments in exchange for their purchases of United States securities." OPEC presently owns about $12 billion of the national debt. As an added service the Treasury permits OPEC to buy US debt at private sale rather than at public auction like everyone else. The practice—known as "add-ons"—was also part of the 1974 Simon-Saudi Arabia deal. It gives OPEC an option to buy Treasury bills at the average price determined at that day's auction.

GAO's recommendation to lift OPEC confidentiality is strongly resisted by the executive branch. The Treasury argues that somehow such publicity "would discriminate against the oil producing countries." The Federal Reserve was concerned that "delicate relationships with OPEC countries could be disrupted." Our delicate relationships are apparently already threatened by American cartoonists. There are increasing reports that Arab sensitivity is offended by cartoonist renderings of them as fat, swarthy, bearded, rifle-shaking characters in burnooses.

An important figure even the government doesn't possess is the extent of OPEC holdings of Eurodollars. The government doesn't even make a guess at how many dollars are held by OPEC in European and other foreign banks. Certainly these holdings are extensive. The poor dollar—which already has been saved twice—probably could not withstand a concerted OPEC scheme to destroy its value. OPEC, angry at some outrageous cartoon, might dump dollars in an effort to induce panic selling which could be irreversible. The mountain of dollars held by OPEC overseas, estimated at $800 billion, could crumble into the sea.

Many pragmatic Americans think it is a good idea to have Arab investment here since, if need be, we can always grab the assets and say we're taking them back. The GAO noted the president's emergency power to freeze assets as a reason not to worry about Arab withdrawal of bank deposits in US banks. There are a couple of errors in this reasoning. First, most of these assets will slip away before anyone can grab or freeze them. The modern international banking system can transfer $12 billion from New York to Switzerland in

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the blink of a computer. Second, looking at the office buildings and other hard assets, one important reason the Arabs are here is the protection given them by the US Constitution. The Constitution prohibits a taking of property without due process and without fair compensation. Of course, it was all right for the Arabs to expropriate the assets of US oil companies in their lands, but they sleep comfortably knowing we won't and can't do the same.

To get back to Joseph, after he got all their money and possessions for the Pharaoh, the Egyptians came back and said, "We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies and our lands . . . buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh."

Joseph accepted: "Behold I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh." The Egyptians were now slaves—bought and paid for. And Joseph announced a new law that in the future Pharaoh would receive one-fifth of the produce of all the land. Only the lands of the priests were exempted. In the modern version, it is not too hard to guess who the priests will be. The favored class must be the bankers who invited the Arabs into the fabric of our financial system. Some politicians, like John Connally, are trying to get in too.

The Egyptians thanked Joseph: "Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants." The road to serfdom has several steps. Joseph led the Egyptians naturally along it, not disclosing till the end that slavery was the real price of bread. It would be bad timing to tell your intention at the start, while people still had their money and property. You could have resistance.

Paul Volcker of the Federal Reserve is jumping a few steps when he warns that the "standard of living of the average American has to decline." And after some decline and further weakening you will be told the real price—your freedom. As the stakes come to be clear to Americans, that could lead to resistance.

William J. Quirk

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A preview of the Department of Education.

Those Who Can't Teach, Consult

by Howie Kurtz

In 1977, the Robert R. Moton Memorial Institute decided to come to Washington. After living off federal grants for six years, this prominent educational consulting firm felt compelled to abandon New York and Philadelphia and move closer to the well. So the Moton folks packed up their furniture and their boxes and hauled everything down to Washington, where they set up shop in a modern office building with two other educational consulting outfits. The move cost about $40,000, but that didn't worry the Moton people, who merely sent the bill to the federal government. The monthly payments were pretty steep at their fashionable new address on S Street, Northwest, but this was after all a legitimate cost of doing business, so the government helped pay the rent as well. Besides, the Moton people liked the neighborhood. One night, the vice president took a colleague to Erik's, a slightly seedy topless bar around the corner on Connecticut Avenue. They had a few drinks, watched the show, and put the $32 tab on their government expense account.

There are many others in the educational consulting game. Back in 1971, the Moton Institute joined forces with four other consulting firms to form the Technical Assistance Consortium to Improve College Services, better known as TACTICS. It is a tightly knit group of academic experts who have mastered the art of winning federal grants, often by doing business with former colleagues at TACTICS who are now giving out money on behalf of the government.

The program that keeps TACTICS and nearly 200 other consulting groups comfortably afloat is Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Conceived during the heyday of the Great Society, this program has handed out nearly a billion dollars to hundreds of so-called "developing colleges" over the past 14 years. The money is supposed to help bring struggling colleges

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into the academic mainstream by beefing up their faculties, improving their student counseling, computerizing their business offices, and so on. But while some schools have made good use of their grants, others simply have become dependent on the aid or have squandered it on a variety of wasteful endeavors. And a growing chunk of the money has been swallowed up by the ubiquitous consulting firms such as the Moton Institute.

The old Office of Education at HEW, which has just been reincarnated as a new Cabinet department, has totally botched the Title III operation, and the same weaknesses can be found in most of the agency's educational assistance programs. The federal education bureaucracy does not actually run any school program. Instead, it channels federal money, through a thicket of middlemen organizations, to private, state, and local schools that compete for its funds. The mismanagement and waste that federal investigators have discovered in the Title III program are a taste of what we can expect from the Department of Education, which President Carter pushed through Congress to fulfill a campaign promise to the National Education Association.

An Office of Education internal memo says that "the TACTICS consortium appears to have grown into a multi-million-dollar business, with a virtual monopoly on assistance to four-year black colleges funded through Title III." The TACTICS firms may be receiving about one-quarter of this aid, about $14 million a year, but the channels of money are too intricately interwoven to compute the exact amount.

The reason this program turned into a bonanza for groups like TACTICS is that the Office of Education, in its wisdom, required every developing college to hire an "assisting agency," the current jargon for consulting firms. Many of the colleges were floundering, unsure of how to handle the sudden influx of federal money, and there was no way to determine when a school had gone beyond "developing" status. Only an infusion of experts, it was felt, could make the federal investment pay off. The consultants have had a dramatic impact on the program, all right, though it may not be exactly what LBJ had in mind. They have funneled large sums of money through the developing schools to pay for their own pet projects. They have set up plush offices and traveled to warm climates to ponder the great issues of education. And they have written the grant applications for some of their schools, which often resent the intrusion but are afraid to complain because the consultants have many well-placed friends in Washington.

Take one of the Moton Memorial Institute's showcase projects, the Moton Center for Independent Studies. Every year, 10 scholars are chosen to spend the year at a secluded estate along the York River in southern Virginia, there to pursue their postdoctoral research. They dine together on southern-style food prepared by the two house cooks, and occasionally abandon their academic regimen to use the estate's swimming pool, tennis court, and recreation room. Each professor is paid $15,000, plus room and board, to study topics like Jamaican folklore, the Liberian labor movement (1929-35), and the impact of Henrik Ibsen on Japanese society. And some of them return, refreshed and intellectually fortified, to places like Howard University and Yale, neither of which is a "developing" college. The federal government has awarded more than one million dollars for this operation, funneled through St. Paul's College, a predominantly black school with 650 students in Lawrenceville, Virginia. St. Paul's has absolutely nothing to do with the intellectual retreat. In fact, the school has not sent a single professor to the center.

Last fall, the financial plug was nearly pulled on the Moton Center. Three private experts hired by the office of education said it shouldn't be funded because it had no connection to the college it was supposed to be helping. The Moton Institute, it turned out, was using $20,000 from each year's grant to pay the rent on its Washington office; $30,000 as part of the salary of its president; and another $9000 for Moton officials to fly to conferences to select the scholars. Deputy Education Commissioner Alfred Move decided that it was time to end the center's federal subsidy. Things looked bleak when Broadus Butler, the president of Moton, rushed in to confer with Move's staff. But a few weeks later, Move changed his mind and gave the Moton Center another $300,000. "It would be improper to cut them off precipitously," a spokeswoman explained.

The folks at Moton seem quite adept at getting their way with the education bureaucrats. One reason is that they are the same people, at different stages of their careers. In 1977, for example, Moton was ordered to give back $90,000 to the government in a dispute over improper expenses. Frantic letters were sent back and forth. Finally, the director of the Title III program, Willa Player, told Moton officials in a letter that they could forget about the $90,000 repayment. The following year, Player turned up as an official at another of the TACTICS firms, called University Associates. The government later decided that Player had exceeded her authority and again ordered the firm to return the $90,000. Player is still at University Associates, along with F. David Mathews, who was secretary of HEW under President Ford.

The president of University Associates, Frank Rose, runs another outfit called the Lamar Society out of the same office at L'Enfant Plaza. Auditors from the General Accounting Office had trouble separating what goes on at University Associates, which is supported by Title III funds, from the activities of the Lamar Society, which gets grants from places like the Ford Foundation. The auditors found that Rose is paid about $36,000 in salary under Title III, and also gets about $30,000 a year for his work at the Lamar Society.

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Another part of the TACTICS network is something called the Institute for Services to Education. Every summer for the past 12 years, more than two dozen people from ISE have flown to New Orleans for a three-week academic conference, courtesy of the taxpayers. They are supposed to be producing curriculum materials for developing schools, but much of the $88,000 a year ISE gets from the government goes for travel, room and board. The money is channeled through Talladega College in Alabama, which didn't send anyone to last summer's get-together.

In the summer of 1978, fortune smiled on ISE. One of its top officials, Edward Brantley, was picked to become the new director of the Title III program. Naturally, Brantley's former colleagues found him a pleasure to deal with once he joined the government. He was invited to speak at ISE's annual conference. He tried and failed to get a government job for a Moton vice president; but another Moton official was tapped to become a special assistant to Move, the deputy commissioner of education. Across town, meanwhile, Brantley's wife was working as director of the Title III program at the University of the District of Columbia, spending the money awarded by her husband's office. She switched to another job at the college a few months later to avoid the sticky situation.

Before long, though, things started to go sour for Brantley. The people who sign the checks in the grants division began complaining that they couldn't figure out how Brantley's former associates at TACTICS were spending the money they were getting. Soon a team of HEW auditors was pouring over the TACTICS books. Some colleges had as much trouble accounting for their grants as the consultants. A group of auditors was dispatched to Knoxville College in Tennessee, where Brantley had been president before joining ISE. They found that the school had improperly spent $119,000 and could not trace another $240,000 in salaries. Some of the money had been spent on parties and a human sexuality workshop. Some had gone for rental of movies like *Pink Finger*, *Aaron Loves Angela*, and *Night of the Living Dead*. Another $59,000 was spent on a basic studies program for freshmen that didn't exist. There were no payroll records to check on salaries. And when the auditors asked to see the $15,000 worth of new IBM typewriters the school had purchased with government money, they were told the machines were in a locked room and the key could not be found.

By last summer, though, Brantley faced a very different problem: the 1979-80 academic year was fast approaching, and most of the $120 million in available aid had not yet been awarded. Frenetic efforts were made to give out the remaining money. One grant was made to a school in North Carolina whose accreditation had just been revoked. Another grant went to a college in Alaska with just 13 full-time students. Senator Max Baucus of Montana began holding oversight hearings on the beleaguered program. The senator asked Brantley to explain why questionable grants had been made to one college after another; Brantley could not answer a single question. A few days later, Brantley was removed from his job as director of the program and—not fired, of course—transferred to unspecified duties. When Baucus held another hearing in December, Brantley returned as a surprise witness. He charged that his superiors, Moye and associate commissioner of education Leonard Spearman, had casually made wholesale changes in the grants to 175 of the 400 colleges competing for aid under the program, without even reading the elaborate and costly applications the schools had filed. Moye and Spearman had sat around the table and gone down the list of schools one by one, increasing some grants by hundreds of thousands of dollars and slashing others by similar amounts. No black college was allowed to receive a smaller grant than it did the year before, but Moye and Spearman said this was because of a White House directive on minority aid.

Much of the blame for this fiasco lies on Capitol Hill. The program is designed so that a little bit of money flows into every congressional district. Rather than trying to beef up a few really promising institutions, the government spreads the dollars around so thinly that they have only a small impact on most of the schools. Not one of the 800 "developing" colleges aided by the Title III program has "developed" and left the program. In this respect, it is just like the Small Business Administration's notorious 8(a) program to help develop successful minority businesses (see "Capitalism Without Tears," *TNR*, April 1, 1978). The elaborate process of rating the schools and hiring private experts (at $150,000 a year) to evaluate them is quickly cast aside when the letters and phone calls start coming from Capitol Hill. In 1979, no fewer than 212 members of Congress wrote letters to the top federal education officials in an effort to secure funding for their favored schools. Many of these pleas were successful, enabling the members to score a few points by bringing home a grant for their local community colleges.

Senate minority leader Howard Baker and Democratic senator Jim Sasser, for instance, wrote several letters on behalf of Freed-Hardeman College in their home state of Tennessee. The school was ranked 188th out of 272 competing four-year colleges, and two of the three experts who evaluated it said the college shouldn't get a dime. Yet somehow the school came away with $150,000. The folks at Freed-Hardeman, however, wanted more. So Baker's and Sasser's aides huddled privately with the top education people, Moye and Spearman, who quickly announced that the college would be favored with another $115,000. But Don Mueller, the grants official who had to approve the extra money, balked. "It is quite clear that program officials have blatantly violated HEW policies," he declared in a memo. The academic dean at Freed-

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Hardeman called Mueller at home on a Sunday and warned that if the money wasn't released that day, Mueller would be called on the carpet in the office of a congressman or senator. The battle ended later that day when Mueller's superiors ordered him to approve the extra grant.

All these political favors and financial abuses have somewhat obscured the fact that the idea of helping struggling colleges is still a good one. The consultants, of course, say they know the most about helping these schools. They truly believe they are doing the Lord's work as they roll out their charts and graphs and explain in their best jargon why the effort would fail without them. And they solemnly insist they are not getting rich off the program, although their organizations' non-profit status doesn't stop them from taking $42,000 salaries and a variety of fringe benefits. When they are under attack, the consultants declare in not so subtle terms that any criticism of them or the black college they serve has overtones of racism. "We feel persecuted," said Van Allen, executive director of TACTICS. "Any time anything of significance starts flowing into the black community, someone raises objections. They're talking about discontinuing support for the assisting agency relationship, and we have to be very antagonized about this."

But it's hard to see what benefits trickle down to impoverished students when the TACTICS people gather for their conferences in Puerto Rico, or spend the summer in New Orleans, or play tennis at an estate in rural Virginia. It's hard to explain when officials at another far-flung consortium called ACCTION use $1700 a month for a fancy Washington office, then spend $165,000 a year so its participants can travel around the country. These extravagances dismay many administrators at the schools involved. One Florida college official said he was "tickled to death" when his school's contract with a consulting firm was canceled by the government, because now he could spend the $144,000 on something his campus really needed. Disadvantaged students really are not being helped when one of the few programs designed to assist them becomes a life-support system for a small band of consultants. There's no doubt it will take a tough political fight to cut these people out of the action. Will the Department of Education be more interested in helping a slowly developing group of colleges or a rapidly developing group of Washington experts?

The Polish pope versus the German theologian.

Scared Theology

by Martin E. Marty

Thanks to a typographical error in its catalog, Luther/Northwestern Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, currently offers the degree Master of Scared Theology. Such a degree could be useful today in world Catholicism. John Paul II has thrown the fear of God, or at least fear of the pope, into Doctors of Sacred Theology. He encouraged the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith to declare that German theologian Hans Küng has "departed from the integral truth of Catholic faith" and can no longer function as a Catholic teacher.

Theologians had known that the Congregation was long looking for a victim, and they had feared that conservative-minded John Paul II might discourage bold inquiry in the church. But when the two teamed up so early in the current pontificate, many quaked. How should they react? Simple acquiescence was impossible. They had learned from dissenters against Mao: "First you nod your head, then you bow your head, then you lose your head." Rather than nod before a pope they otherwise respect or bow before the Congregation, an institution they despise in every way, they chose to take a stand. From Spain to Germany to America, Catholic dissenters spoke up.

Somewhat cautiously. Küng is the most visible, most popular theologian in the world. He is a best seller, and the audiences he attracts help draw attention to the work of other progressives in the church. Yet they do not regard Küng as a seminal thinker on whom they all

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depend for ideas in the way they have depended on the senior German Jesuit, Karl Rahner. Küng has a traditional streak and wants to serve Catholicism by reworking the old lore, but he also pushes the borders of orthodoxy at points that concern others less.

"We, as concerned and committed Roman Catholic theologians, cognizant that no one of us necessarily agrees with the opinions on particular issues of any other Roman Catholic scholar including Hans Küng, publicly affirm our recognition that Hans Küng is indeed a Roman Catholic theologian." They support his intentions and his trajectory but not all his detail or tactics. Many were grieved over his op-ed approach to challenging, if not taunting, an immensely popular pope who might be educated into the nuances of pluralism and academic freedom. They fear the pope's education was aborted by Küng's taunts.

While few cherish the term heresy, most moderates and liberals agree that the Catholic church, like any other community, has boundaries and has a right to them. The support for Küng, then, has not come as with the jerk of liberal knees. The defenders know that nations on the political right, left, and center hold concepts of sedition and treason, and enforce them more readily than the church does its own. They know that academic communities devoted to intellectual freedom are capable of ostracizing "scientists" who provide rationales for defending racial inferiority on genetic terms. Revisionist Marxists have been hounded by the orthodox more than liberal theologians have been hounded by Catholic traditionalists. The issue, then, is not whether there should be boundaries, but why they should exist, who defines them, and who does the enforcing.

Catholicism has two agencies. The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, alias the Inquisition, has a track record befitting its alias. Rendered ineffectual during the reigns of Pope John XXIII and Paul VI, it has been thirsting for conquest, and is pursuing any number of innovators. Dissenting theologians chafe, but they can live with the Congregation. So many of its past actions were later discredited and even repudiated by official Catholicism that one need only await the verdict of history for vindication against its actions.

The second agency is the papacy. In remoter times, as your friendly neighborhood Catholic historian will be the first to tell you, the pope had great difficulty asserting authority. His armies and his policies were feared or followed depending upon the self-interests of the monarchs in the rest of Europe. The church outlived folly and bastardy inside the Vatican and competition from schismatic popes and councils through centuries. But in 1870 a beleaguered church, hoping to shore up the waning authority of the pope, after much hassling and with some reservations voted for papal infallibility. This doctrine or weapon rarely has been used, but it is a symbol designed to inspire deference.

John Paul II believes simply and profoundly in the "magisterium" or teaching authority of the church, as mediated by the bishops and the supreme bishop, the pope. As a philosopher, actor, poet, personality, and morally credible world traveler, he has piled up support for the kind of action he took against Küng when he assented to the condemnation by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. A Protestant gasped, "You have a pope who knows how to pope" as John Paul awed Catholic neighbors at mass in an Iowa field. The verb "to pope" means, in John Paul's mind, to coerce the clergy into assent where he and the Congregation cannot persuade them.

During the American tour, many Catholics saluted the pontiff with fingers crossed, and engaged in selective hearing. The Catholic right, delighted now with the slap against modernizers, wore muffs or uttered grumbles after the papal speech at the United Nations, because of its attacks on capitalism. The laity applauded the papal processions and then went home to practice birth control as before, despite the pope's condemnations of the practice. And the clerical left and many lay supporters withheld consent as the pope dashed the hopes of women who would be priests and of male priests who might wish to marry, and as he took other hard lines on doctrine.

"How many divisions has the pope?" Stalin sneered. He has no divisions to use against conservatives who dissent against the teaching in papal encyclicals after a century of social prodding. Nor can he coerce lay people to follow in matters of familial ethos. The pope's greatest power is clerical: he can decide who gets to enter and remain in the clergy and what he or she may say while remaining in good standing.

When the Hatfields and McCoys feud out of doors, it is not wise to enter No Man's Land, and when they

End of an Era

With this issue, Gwen Somers closes her career at *The New Republic* after 22 years as assistant to the editors. This is of course a great loss to all of us on the staff, but also to the many other cranks and eccentrics whose manuscripts and telephone calls she has handled with such patience and charm since 1958. We're sure they all join us in thanking her for her great contribution to this journal, and in wishing her the best for the future.

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move indoors it is not good manners to follow. So an admirer of the pope and friend of Küng, one who recognizes boundaries in the church and of course supports academic freedom, but who is a Protestant, has to be cautious. One can dream of conciliation and applaud the rare German bishop who works for it. But the pope and Congregation on one hand, and most theologians of the world on the other, see the world in different ways and live by different ethoses, however much they may share the same core of faith. One can argue, as I do, that for Catholicism to be catholic, it needs tension between the two world views for the sake of fullness; but such argument is uncompelling to those who want to firm up faith or to express dissent.

On one side is the pope, whose experience of Catholicism is in Poland. In such nations where it is hard to be a Catholic, it is easy to be a Catholic: the regime provides a foil and a motive for hard-lining. In Western Europe and America, where it is easy to be a Catholic, it is hard to be a Catholic. A pluralist society has so many options, so many lures, and many of them are represented within the church. The Mormons are homogeneous and can easily expel Sonia Johnson for supporting the ERA. The Amish are a tight little community that can shun a man who dissents against its family practices. But American Catholicism is crazily-quilted with ethnic, political, and class interests, to say nothing of a variety of philosophies and outlooks.

Sometimes I tell my sons that they will "never understand" why their parents are so frugal or why and how America was once united, because they did not live through the Depression or World War II. As with time, so with place: the Küngs will never understand Polish Catholicism and it will take great acts of empathy for the pope to understand why in the world of pluralism and freedom it is urgent for theologians to do some fresh formulating along the boundaries.

Hans Küng comes on the scene with a sense of Teutonic rectitude and argumentative fury that, alas for him, reminds his enemies of Martin Luther. If something is true, one asserts it. "Here I stand," no matter what intriguers in the Congregation may think. He has not the patience of his milder-mannered and highly respected Belgian colleague, Edward Schillebeeckx, who has nodded and bowed a bit and may still lose his head. Küng and Schillebeeckx and their defenders around the world have difficulty speaking of the "integral" truth of the Catholic faith, as if all parts can and do mesh easily and lock into place. They have experienced the crisis of historical consciousness; they know how doctrine develops and how much variety of philosophic outlook has appeared through the Catholic ages. They know the daring of Augustine and Aquinas, of John Henry Newman and John Courtney Murray, who took high risks with alien philosophy and helped rework the Catholic tradition until their views became "official."

Thus Küng's challenges rub at two sensitive points. One is infallibility, which he and almost everyone else know was a late development, grudgingly assented to by many responsible 19th-century church leaders, and supported by frail arguments. The other has to do with defining how the divine and the human meet in Jesus. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E. the church fathers came up with the formula that these "are recognized *in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.*" Modern theologians respect the intention and boundary-setting of Chalcedon, but neither they nor the traditionalists inhabit a world that can handle phrases like "of one substance [*homoousios*] with the Father. . . ." May there not be ways, ask the moderns, to restate the faith?

So theologians and the magisterial heads of the church are at a standoff. The pope acts with regret, for he is not inhumane. Küng, if he loses his job at Tubingen, will survive in the academy, though he too will sorrow. Who's happy? Vengeful traditionalists are. They have read the polls in the decade past, and have seen how an indentity-hungry world is convulsively regathering into tribes. The ayatollah is strong, and so are the Fundamentalists and the Mormons. The questioners and inquirers seem to languish. Let Catholicism turn aggressive about boundaries and all will be well. Who else is happy? I suppose academic skeptics who always thought that "a Catholic university is a contradiction in terms" will gloat over the limits of freedom.

Meanwhile presidents of Catholic universities, rectors of diocesan seminaries, bishops who have given encouragement to a variety of theologians, have to keep low profiles or take quietly firm stands. This may be a good day for lay theologians while the clergy gets its act together.

Given the diversities in world Catholicism, it is not likely that a single pattern of response will emerge. One hears of a variety of models. Luther is out of the question; the world has 80 million Lutherans already, so Küng is not necessary as a leader of a new flank of the church. Galileo is not really plausible, because papal or inquisitorial coercion today carries little civil or academic authority. Maybe something like Shostakovichism will appear, as certain kinds of Catholic talents will now adhere, now waver when the party line comes down.

To dismiss the Küng supporters as effete elites would be a mistake. Küng's *On Being a Christian*, an international best-seller, enabled its followers to remain Catholic, to love the tradition. These are not great days for theology. But if the thoughts of Küng and Schillebeeckx and their kind have found only a slight hearing, it is certain that the recidivist teaching of the Congregation will find none at all. The eloquent and in so many ways credible Pope John Paul II will carry burdens of persuasion that look awesome to those of us with shoulders more frail than his. The rest of us, Catholic and Protestant, have a right for the moment to be masters of scared theology.

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

The Cynic Route

It's easy for anyone who pays a lot of attention to films to develop a cynical streak. In fact, it's helpful. One of the ways to sustain hope in bleak artistic times, or on some occasions in boom times, is by skating through on cynicism. ("Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.") But sometimes even the sustaining force of cynicism can get sorely swamped.

No art, certainly no expensive art like film or theater or architecture or (performance of) music, is entirely in the artist's hands, in capitalist or socialist countries or anywhere else. The enablement to work rests elsewhere. Quality *is* in the artist's hands, but others have to give him the chance to try for it. Very often, in film, he lowers the quality level in order to get the chance to work at all. That's universally clear. Nevertheless. . . .

Nevertheless, here is *Cuba*, directed by Richard Lester. In 1967 Lester made *How I Won the War*, with a screenplay by the man who wrote *Cuba*, Charles Wood; with the same editor and cinematographer, John Victor Smith and David Watkin—extremely gifted people all. *HIWTW* is in my view the best antiwar film ever made, kept from wide celebration chiefly because a lot of its dialogue is in English slang delivered in fast throwaway style. (It's much the style of Monty Python. Lester, whose British TV and radio work was one of the Monty Python forebears, may just have been ahead of his time. Perhaps *HIWTW* could be revived successfully now that *Life of Brian* is a hit.) Also—not also but integrally—the earlier film is the best cinematic use of presentational style that I know. It works through some of the "epic" ideas of Brecht more rigorously and truly than, for instance, any of Godard's flirtations with them. Both Lester's cast and the film itself seem to be saying: "We don't want you to be moved by these actions, we want you to look at them—to see this slaughter in its cosmic absurdity, made more absurd because you excoriate war at the same time that, in the core of the core of your soul, you want it and cause it." *HIWTW* is not about the horror of war, it's about the horror of human beings. And, since it's a film, it's inevitably about the horror of war films *and* antiwar films, most of which, even the latter, finally appeal to those secrets in us that keep war flourishing on the planet.

That was 1967. In 1979 the same filmmaking team produces a picture in which the long climactic episode is a battle in a sugar-cane field that is a coarse and vulgar derivative of every shoot-em-up ever made. In the intervening years Lester has done things like *The Three Musketeers* and *Robin and Marian* which keep *Cuba* from being a complete surprise. Nevertheless it's completely depressing. Cynicism itself gurgles under the depression.

The picture begins by *telling* you it's going to be bad. The first things we see are immense close-ups of cocktails and iced drinks and girls in bathing suits—*echt* TV commercial. All that was lacking was a voice saying: "Need to relax? Come to our sun." It continues in that and other deplorable veins. Sean Connery is a soldier of fortune, a British ex-officer, who arrives in Havana in 1959, hired by a Batista general as an expert in putting down insurrection to do just that with Castro. Connery meets a Cuban woman with whom he once had an affair elsewhere. She is now married into a rich family, but he wants her back.

Connery's failure to stem the Castro tide and his failure to win back the woman are the interwoven actions of the film. This may sound promising, but the whole script, as well as the direction, is smothered in banana-republic and lost-love clichés. I've long thought that Charles Wood, as screenwriter (*The Charge of the Light Brigade*) and as playwright (*Veterans*, which is about the making of *Light Brigade*), had scintillation unsung. Every line of *Cuba* could have been written by a good film-writing student who had made a close study of *Casablanca*.

Connery is more flexible than usual but still a bit of a stodge. Brooke Adams, who was in *Days of Heaven* and who has a mouth that makes her look like a high-school version of the mask of tragedy, gives a performance as the unforgettable woman from the past that's a juvenile joke. Martin Balsam, the general, grunts in a Cuban uniform instead of grunting in various kinds of civilian garb as he has been doing lately. However, Hector Elizondo, as his aide, has good, quiet loyalty-cum-disgust, and Chris Sarandon, as Adams's knowingly dissolute husband, has style.

Watkin and Smith do their photography and editing with predictable adroitness but no special distinction. Lester spends most of his time looking for little nodules of absurdity to interrupt the smooth hack progress of the film, so that he can prove that he hasn't sold out.

An unfocused and glibly banal picture

Films Worth Seeing

The Electric Horseman. Light script pretending to be heavy, but some pleasant romancing between Robert Redford, ex rodeo champ, and Jane Fonda, sassy TV reporter.

Kramer vs. Kramer. Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep, divorced, fight for custody of their child, Justin Henry. Mediocre script, excellent (*excellent*) acting all the way.

Monty Python's Life of Brian. What's all the fuss about? Just your garden-variety wickedly witty spoof about a Jew born the same time and place as Jesus who does *not* want to be a messiah.

Star Trek. Impressive science-fiction pictures and effects. The actors and the story don't get in the way too much.

SK

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in itself, *Cuba* is, in the perspective of Lester's accomplishments and talent, a bitter reminder of filmmaking realities. The ones who beat those realities—like Bresson and Rohmer—are directors whose films never made big money. Are they protected, at least partially, by the fact that big money has never been interested in *them*? By the fact that modest returns and critical acclaim have been enough to keep them going in a filmmaking situation where costs can be lower than here?

It isn't just a matter of choice between commerce and purity: you can be an angelically pure filmmaker, talented, and still not get a chance to work. A painter or poet is free: a filmmaker, in almost every country these days, needs someone with several million dollars' worth of confidence in him before he can show whether he's pure or not. Here is a blunt fact: the history of the very best film, as well as the mediocre and the bad, anywhere in the world, is also fundamentally the history of financiers' confidence.

Lester had the freedom to make *HIWTW* because he had made the two successful Beatles films, *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*, which were in themselves admirable. Lester lost his freedom because of, among other things, the box-office failure of *HIWTW* and the box-office/artistic failure of *The Bed Sitting Room*. Since then, he has done what he had to do in order to work.

Is the filmmaking life really as open-and-shut financially as that? Does character count for nothing? I hope I don't know the answer.

Steven Spielberg's new failure *1941* is a different kettle of fishiness. Spielberg, who is on top of the heap, just had a bad initial idea, which he was in a power-position to pursue.

Spielberg had made *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* whose final 40 minutes are a cultural monument and, more relevantly, which became the eighth largest box-office success in history. Before that, he had made *Jaws*, a cultural blob, which was the second biggest success in history. One can almost hear the producers giggling nervously when Spielberg broached the idea of this new comedy, laughing because they didn't want to lose him. If so, it's the black-mirror image of the Lester situation: freedom being used foolishly.

The idea by Robert Zemeckis & Bob Gale and John Milius—a team and an individual, I guess—was to write a slapstick comedy about the Japanese-invasion scare in California right after Pearl Harbor. Sort of grabs you, doesn't it? Right by the pit of the stomach. There seem to me only two possibilities for comedy about horror: scathing irony like *HIWTW* and Wertmüller's *Seven Beauties* or light-fingered farce, like *Private's Progress* with Ian Carmichael and Terry-Thomas. One thing is sure: the comedy must succeed *completely*. Anything less turns it into offense.

Some of the slapstick in *1941* is ingenious without being funny. Most of it isn't even ingenious. Spielberg shows no hint of a gift for comedy of any kind. Perhaps he'll get back now to the serious exaltation of serious corn through serious faith in the medium.

Robert Brustein on theater

A Theater for Clever Journalists

W. B. Yeats once called Ibsen the chosen author of very clever journalists. How much more appropriate this is as a description of Tom Stoppard. He has insinuated himself into the affections of smart people like a heartworm, usurping whatever place might once have been reserved there for genuine artists. Can anyone really take *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* seriously after seeing the plays on which it was based, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Waiting for Godot*? I'm not complaining that Stoppard is lightweight; there's a place in my heart, too, for good-natured entertainments. I'm grumbling rather over how he has used his considerable gifts in the service of a shell game, conning the intelligentsia into finding him significant with a few philosophical reflections on a few intellectual themes. As a dramatist, Stoppard is a dandy. His plays frequently toy with difficult subjects, but they are essentially not very serious conceits—pirouettes by a rather vain dancer who knows he can leap higher than anyone else but seems to have forgotten why.

Like many intelligent émigrés, Stoppard has learned well how to imitate the customs of his adopted country; the trouble is that the imitation is largely a matter of style. Perhaps upper-middle-class English drama *is* largely a matter of style—what Humphrey Bogart (in *Beat the Devil*) once called "all pomp and no circumstance." How odd that the major influence on the leading English playwrights of this century should be not William Shakespeare or Bernard Shaw or Oscar Wilde but . . . Noel Coward. It is Coward's bitchy wit that unifies the otherwise diverse dramas of John Osborne, Simon Gray, and Harold Pinter, and it is Coward's smoky fluency that curls through the plays of Tom Stoppard. (Example: He: "You were miles away." She: "Alas, no." Another example. "Ah, the media. It sounds like a convention of spiritualists." Still another. "I was meant to be one of those women who blow smoke in the faces of strong men in dark nightclubs.") Oscar Wilde used to formulate epigrams as a satiric commentary on the frivolous nature of his contemporaries and perhaps on his own. Witticisms in the Coward manner usually are only preludes to songs.

Night and Day (ANTA Theatre) is a postlude to a song—Cole Porter's famous tribute to the beat-beat-beat of the tom-toms, which is played once before the rise of the curtain, probably to justify the title. On the face of it, the play has a serious subject, taking place in a convulsed African country, possibly Uganda, and offering commentary on the nature and conduct of the Western press—a kind of colonialist version of *The Front Page*. But whatever might be cogent in this material is obscured by an excess of verbal sparks and stylish posturing, distracting us from the author's intention to the author's manner. Things happen in the play—a revolution, a savage beating, a senseless death—but only as commas and semicolons in the dialogue. Typical is a moment when one of Stoppard's characters, in the midst of an uprising, describes the way a single event would be reported in every British newspaper; I was reminded of Cyrano's virtuoso speech on his nose. But it is one thing to introduce such dazzle into a swashbuckling romantic comedy; it is quite another to have it performed by people in extreme circumstances. Instead of reflecting on the danger they are in, Stoppard's characters concentrate on balances and antitheses or piling up adjectives in front of nouns. What we

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have here is less stage dialogue than a kind of *bel canto*, where people take breaths not to admit the air of reality but rather to prepare themselves for more exhalations of claustral wit.

To sing his arias, Stoppard has found his ideal coloratura in Maggie Smith. Sitting in a variety of bamboo and wicker chairs, her red hair blazing against the louvered flats, Smith squeezes Stoppard's lines through her nose like a cookie mold, pressing out sentences that can be wrapped and packaged and mailed overseas. When the action flags, the actress is permitted to indulge her talent for impersonations, which she performs before an admiring claque ("Watch yourself, Tallulah") like a dolphin leaping through a hoop. I gather this character is meant to have two modes of address—one for thinking, the other for speaking. Since she delivers virtually all of her lines to the audience, it is impossible to tell which is which. This makes a hash of the plot, and it plays havoc with the concentration of the rest of the cast who, lacking eye contact with the leading lady, are generally reduced to doing their own impersonations: RADA-trained English actors performing on the West End.

Bent (New Apollo Theater) doesn't suffer from a lack of seriousness; its missing element is depth. Martin Sherman's play about the treatment of homosexuals in German prison camps has been carefully researched and modestly written. It just hasn't been sufficiently imagined. In the hands of a better dramatist, it might have been a major play; here, at best, it is merely an interesting one. I was reminded of Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy*, another work that failed an original idea because the playwright was not enough of an artist to realize the implications of his subject.

The central character of *Bent* is Max, a middle-class man who makes the error of inviting a young stormtrooper into his bed on the very night (the Night of the Long Knives) when Hitler decided to exterminate Roehm and his SA corps. The opening is the most effective scene in the play. Hung-over homosexuals, clearing their heads, brushing their teeth, trying to remember details of the last night's debauch—the scene might be Greenwich Village in 1979. Suddenly the stage erupts in violence. The SS burst in and shoot the stormtrooper, Max flees with his delicate lover, Rudy—a legend tells us we are in Berlin in 1934. Soon Max and Rudy are captured and transported to Dachau. On the train, Rudy is brutally beaten because he wears glasses. To avoid being identified as a homosexual too, Max helps to kill his lover, and later has sex with the corpse of a 13-year-old girl.

This gains him the yellow star of the Jew rather than the pink triangle of the homosexual, an emblem he disdains because he has been told that queers are the lowest order in the camp. It is here that the play goes haywire. Trying to establish a hierarchy of the doomed is not only callous but ahistorical: the gas chambers later would make no such social distinctions. Inevitably, this treatment has started Jewish and homosexual groups quarreling over who endured the most in the camps, the kind of competitive suffering that Edgar warned us against, in *King Lear*, when he said: "The worst is not so long as we can say 'This is the worst.'"

It is the imagination of *King Lear*'s author that is needed for a subject of this kind; most of us simply do not have the resources to fictionalize such unbearable facts. This may be why Sherman—having conceived the situation—goes on to ruin it in the second act by turning his play into a love story with a melodramatic conclusion. Max, though filled with self-loathing over his means of survival, gets a relatively privileged position in the camp: moving rocks from one end of the yard to another. Having developed a passion for another homosexual inmate, Horst, he manages to wangle him a job in the yard, and—in a scene that has been praised for its sensitivity—shares an orgasm with him while they are standing at attention, four feet from each other's bodies. Horst is killed soon after, and Max, reaching down in the pit to retrieve his dead lover's coat, proudly puts on the pink triangle before immolating himself on an electrified fence.

This provides the play with an heroic conclusion, but only through betraying the real nature of the camps, where inmates were robbed of the capacity to fall in love, or have orgasms, or even to commit suicide, partly through being made to perform such meaningless tasks as moving rocks from one side of the yard to another. It was in their capacity to reduce human beings to ciphers that the Nazis were the most precise and methodical—a diabolical distinction recorded with more accuracy in the works of Bruno Bettelheim and Hannah Arendt than in the tendentious artifices of a New York playwright.

The production shares the one-dimensional flatness of the play. Robert Alan Ackerman's direction is domestic and rather trite, and so is Richard Gere's somewhat flip performance as Max. With one exception, the prisoners don't convince you for a moment that they are other than healthy milk-fed Americans, and the Nazis seem like left-over contract players from Universal Studios. The exception is David Dukes as Horst. Gaunt, tortured, lacerated, Dukes gives a performance of harrowing intensity that provides the evening with its few moments of authenticity, by contrast with which the rest looks like propaganda for Gay Lib.

Still, the subject is a potentially interesting one, and it has not been wholly trivialized. The failure, at least, is not of nerve or daring, which alone makes the play an oddity in a theater for clever journalists.

A Hungarian writer between East and West.

The Novelists: George Konrád

by Ivan Sanders

The novelist George Konrád, author of *The Case Worker* and *The City Builder*, spent several months in New York in late 1978, putting the finishing touches on his newest novel which, he admits, he has little chance of seeing in print in his native Hungary. Konrád was arrested briefly in 1974 for having co-authored, with sociologist Iván Szelényi, an essay on the role of the intelligentsia in contemporary East European societies. (See review on page 28.) He left New York at the end of December, ready, after a two-year sojourn abroad, to

Ivan Sanders is a translator and writer. His work has appeared in the *Nation*, *Commonweal*, and other journals.

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return to his homeland. In Paris he learned that new charges would be brought against him if he showed up in Budapest. Konrád is bent on not becoming an émigré writer. On March 31, after three anxious months in France, he flew home. Our conversation, in Hungarian, took place shortly before he left for Europe.

* * *

Ivan Sanders: *Have the two years you spent in the West produced any basic changes in your views about East and West?*

George Konrád: Two years is a long time even if one is no longer very young. Until now I hadn't spent much time away from my native country. If you live in Budapest, you are ringed by a host of problems; the state drops over you like some giant bell jar. You are always aware of its presence, as well as of the problems it engenders in you. When you leave your city, you discover equivalents for things you thought were unique. You realize that the country you lived in is but a tiny dot, in another dot which is the earth. Nevertheless, whatever I maintained before I left Hungary I still maintain, with greater irony perhaps, with greater confidence too. I still feel that just as the Western world is no alternative for the East, the East cannot be an alternative for the West. If I belong anywhere, it's to a curious confraternity. I certainly do not belong to my country's approved culture, nor can I see myself belonging to the approved culture of any Western country. In fact I can't see self-respecting writers belonging to official cultures of any kind.

Sanders: *Some of your friends feel you are taking a risk by returning to Hungary now. After all, you did make a few statements and published an essay which the Hungarian authorities are likely to find objectionable. How do you feel about going home?*

Konrád: I am not particularly worried. If what I said or did are to have any consequences, I accept them. I do believe these consequences are becoming civilized. Both of us—the state and we—are undergoing a kind of learning process. Not only the citizens learn to live with the state; the state, which, too, is made up of citizens after all, learns to live with its subjects. In this two-way learning process there is room for further experimentation.

Sanders: *Your first two novels*—The Case Worker *and* The City Builder—*can be related to different periods of your life. In many ways they are the result of activities you were involved in at one time. Like the hero of your first work, you made your living for a number of years as a social worker, and later, as a sociologist, you dealt with problems of urban living, and indeed were an active city planner. In the work you have just completed, you seem to have gotten away from personal experience, and also have adopted less complex narrative forms. Do you see this novel, entitled* The Loser, *as a new departure for you?*

Konrád: *The Loser* is the story of a generation, not my own, but of an older generation whose life history I followed with great interest. I've always felt that I missed out on something by not having been an adult during the war. My life would probably have developed differently, I would have been involved in many of the things they were involved in, had I been old enough, although in that case I would have been less suited to write this book which they, in all probability, could not have written. . . . In general I was interested in the process by which people arrive at answers to questions of basic import, the ways in which they acquire practical wisdom, and felt that it would be appropriate to choose a hero who, unlike me, has passed the severest tests of life. . . . The events on which the narrative is based, the action itself, also interested me since in Eastern Europe every act takes place in a denser atmosphere; the resistance is greater, and the world of action, because of political pressure, is more dramatic than in the West. The risks are always greater in Eastern Europe. The hero of my novel is on the verge of getting killed at the various historical turning points, and because he risks his own neck and throws himself into the fray, he becomes a killer himself. We must realize that the war and the great social transformation that followed it were the work of a generation of people that was on intimate terms with dying and killing. This is what gives their action a graver coloration.

Sanders: *Because you wrote this latest novel as an outsider, were you better able to understand certain things than in the two previous books whose subject matter is so much closer to you?*

Konrád: There is always a close connection between the author and his hero, even if the hero is very different from the author. The main character who speaks in this novel is—as far as his circumstances permit it—an independent Eastern European intellectual. This has always been my temptation. During

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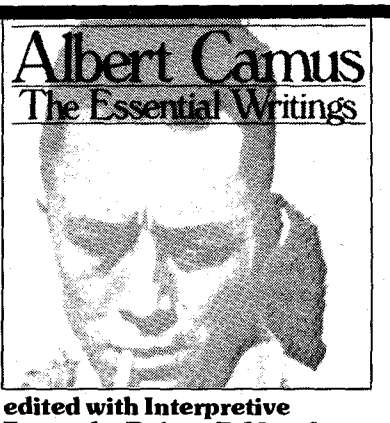

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the past few years politics has crept up on me; it has literally knocked on my door, in one of its least friendly guises. As a result, I've been experiencing the dilemmas born of such confrontations rather more keenly. But I should also mention that I have quite a few friends who belong to the generation that was active in the communist underground, took part in the war, and in the 1956 uprising. These people are full of stories. A regularly recurring event of my life in recent years has been to visit these people and listen to their stories. These, then, are their stories, and it fell to me to write them down. They are true stories, for the most part. It may also be said, of course, that not only members of the generation that had reached adulthood by the time the war broke out had unusual lives, but we, too, who were only children then. I remember that when as a child of nine or 10 I prayed, it was for Allied victory at Tunis or Bizerte. I started listening to the BBC when I was six years old. I was 11 when German troops occupied Hungary. I am a Jew, which meant the danger of deportation and death in one of the camps. During the war I spent a year in Budapest without my parents, so I had to fend for myself. I could not be a child; I had to reckon with the possibility of death. When I returned to my hometown, I saw the world around me in terms of political realities. I saw what fascism had done, what the establishment of a new regime involved. These were personal experiences for me, and not merely experiences, since I already had thoughts, opinions about the changing political picture, and conflicts as to which factions were right. Thus, when I was 15 years old, I was expelled from the youth organization for political reasons. Then came 1953, the thaw: I participated in the reform movement along with other university students. And of course 1956: I was there, too; I even had a submachine gun which I never fired, though it was there in my hand.

Sanders: *Do you believe, then, that there is no apolitical literature in Eastern Europe today?*

Konrád: Politics in Eastern Europe is like money in the Western world; regardless of whether you like it or not, you have an ongoing relationship. You cannot evade its laws. I consider myself neither political nor apolitical—I am anti-political. I wish people's lives were less defined by politics. This new book is about politics, though it's not a political book; it doesn't take a stand in favor of A against B. It's about the passion of politics, which is like romantic passion or the passion for money. It is about a disease, if you will, but one that a whole intellectual class suffered from.

Sanders: *You don't write conventional novels. Your models, nevertheless, seem to be the great realists—Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Ibsen. A great deal has already been said about the stylistic peculiarities of your novels. Your long parallel structures, metaphor clusters, and verbal flourishes reminded one critic of classical rhetoric. According to a less generous critic, your prose 'reads like a quart of beef essence; rich, intense, and replulsive in such quantity.' How consciously do you cultivate a style which is indeed remarkable for its concentrated fervor?*

Konrád: For me style is the ballistic curve of artistic discontent. This discontent moves from the commonplace, the

George Konrád

antithesis of literature, toward a more precise expression, which does not yet exist, or exists only potentially, like a statue in a block of stone. It has to be extracted. At first the text that emerges is rough, free-flowing, unfinished. A narrative sequence in this form may be 10 to 15 pages long, which later becomes two or three pages. What I meant to illustrate with the image of the ballistic curve is the move, the impulse to delimit and condense a still rough, undifferentiated text. When this refining urge subsides, the struggle is over and the final text takes shape. An ideal model of this final text exists in my mind, but I will never reach it. Each sentence hints at a compromise, though I would like to put off this compromise as long as possible, and go as far as I can in search of ultimate precision. Each period of a writer's creative life has its rhythm, a kind of inner pacing, which determines the flow of his work. Each of my novels seems to have a current of its own. The language of *The Case Worker* is, to put it tritely, simple. *The City Builder* is an attempt to extend the boundaries of the novel. My latest work, *The Loser*, was born out of a temptation, an obsession. I wanted to see if it was possible to write a novel in a terse, aphoristic style and still make it have a certain flow.

Sanders: *If you had to pick out the most important experiences in your life, what would they be?*

Konrád: I still feel that my entire life is what defines me—the fact that I was born in Eastern Europe, in Hungary, and came from a bourgeois background; that a divided Europe has been my inescapable, though never wholly accepted, immediate environment, that history for me has never been simply an abstraction, that I am an intellectual in a country where intellectuals play a significant role in shaping the culture. These things added up to daily confrontations, quests, disappointments, which are not only mine. I would say that my most important experiences are interchangeable with those of many other people from East-Central Europe. . . . When I think of my childhood, I see the two-story house of a respectable small-town burgher—my father's house. I see myself sitting in the dining room, eating a five-course meal, while on the street barefoot people munch on bread and watermelon. For a child it's easier to accept this situation than to understand it. The knowledge that I was better off than they sustained me even during the hard times that followed. I always felt I was under a certain obligation. When I became a social worker in charge of children, I was very much aware of these feelings. This was my first real job. I was someone from a more or less secure and pleasant environment, entering an insecure and unpleasant one.

My first novel, *The Case Worker*, was born out of the feeling that I owe these people something; I ought to do something for them. The intellectual in me picked up where the bourgeois left off, which is to say that just as the bourgeoisie was on top before, the intelligentsia is on top now. I could make a secret of this, I could deny it, but why should I? This is how it was; this is how it still is. If a child in today's Hungary would like to be something, he would like to be an intellectual in the broad

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sense—a writer, a physicist, a film director. He wouldn't like to be a millionaire or a landowner because there are no millionaires and landowners. The intellectual, then, is someone people look to or look up to—sometimes the look is hostile, but still he is a role model; his influence is considerable. Under these circumstances the intellectuals are tempted constantly to reassess their role, since at no other time or place have they reached such a position.

Sanders: *A friend from Hungary told me that at home he is quite indifferent about his Jewish origins; in New York, however, he felt very Jewish. Ho do you feel about this?*

Konrád: I am not indifferent at home, and I don't feel any more Jewish here. As I said, I try to embrace everything in my past, which includes the hours spent in the synagogue as a child as much as the later experiences. I never wanted not to be a Jew. I never wanted to dissolve, in the universality of a liberal assimilation or in the homgeneity of an internationalist communist assimilation, the uniqueness of my background: that I was born into a Hungarian Jewish family. The Jews are most certainly a people. How, in what manner, they mingled with the Hungarian people; how the two merged, how they remained apart—these are complex historical questions. One thing I know: I am at once a Hungarian and a Jew.

I remember that in 1944, when I was hiding in Budapest with a group of children, an elderly lady came to see us and advised us to go to a convent where we would be safe. But first, she said, we should convert. I decided not to take her up on her offer, and told the others not to either, though our decision had potentially disastrous consequences the next day. We were rounded up by Hungarian Nazis and were about to be taken to the Danube, to be shot. We children thought that once we were outside, we would scatter in all directions—one of us would surely escape. The Nazis did take us down to the front of the house, but they didn't lead us to the Danube; their chief ordered them elsewhere at the last minute. But not even while this was going on did I regret having turned down that lady's kind offer. The choice to hold on to both of my identities became a recurring one. I had a chance to go to Israel in 1948; friends who left at the time asked me to join them. But I did not go, and a few years later I chose again to stay. Eastern Europe culture with its historical challenges has become my own; this is my life.

Sanders: *You have said that lately, while writing, you have been more aware of the fact that your works are translated into other languages. What does this mean in practice?*

Konrád: The Hungarian poet Gyula Illyés once said that in his mind he always tests his sentences in French before writing them down in Hungarian. When I speak in a foreign language, I have to choose my words very carefully simply because I am not that proficient in the language I am using. As long as my most important messages get through, I am not worried about the lesser ones. The subject and verb are most important; the adjectives and adverbs are not so important. What's more, I don't believe there is such a thing as an isolated Western language. The clarity and transferability of classical Greek and Latin have made them models for all European languages. The language of a Tacitus remains a critique of the literary language of a given time and place.

Sanders: *You speak of clarity, although you are*

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known as a difficult writer. Many people find your works—especially The City Builder—*abstract, and your style much too involved, often inaccessible.*

Konrád: There is no doubt that clarity and accessibility can be defined in many different ways. A literary image must first be clear in the author's mind. If I can convey the thing I see in all its clarity, I've been blessed by the gods. To me clarity in literature is visual precision, plasticity. Of course a sentence can be complex, a subtle mixture of concrete and abstract, and still retain its clarity. If we can relate a unit of meaning with what we feel is sufficient clarity, we have done our share. We have little to do with determining just how intelligible, statistically, that unit is. The question of how complex is the sentence that a given reader can assimilate is one for a cultural sociologist to answer.

Sanders: *Building and destroying seem to be recurrent motifs in* The City Builder. *You describe not only the ravages of wars and revolutions, but natural catastrophies: floods, earthquakes as well. Could the implication in all of this be that man and nature are equally cruel, and the never-ending cycle of raising and knocking down is the unalterable order of things?*

Konrád: It is in the sense that birth and death are part of the natural order; the universe itself, with a great explosion, came into being, evolved, and is moving toward a state of entropy. Everything from inorganic matter to human thought is made meaningful by its finitude and destructibility. The catastrophes in this city—the natural ones as well as historical catastrophes—suggest that the city itself is an amazingly fragile and delicate human creation, the sum of a million inspired moments. The history of our civilization, from Ur and Nineveh on, is in many ways the history—the birth, flowering, and demise—of urban civilizations. Some of the cities declined for historical reasons, but many were destroyed by floods, earthquakes, natural disasters. And they all demonstrated just how vulnerable and destructible human creations are. And how beautiful and poignant. Eastern European history provides especially good examples of periods of quiet growth and sudden, cataclysmic interruptions, although regardless of where you live, you most likely will develop a tender and protective relationship with things already in existence. . . . In Eastern Europe our helplessness in the face of forcible changes and disasters often is depicted with a kind of gallows humor. We know that a bombing raid that destroys an entire way of life or a flood that reduces a house to soggy debris makes a mockery of a life that believes it will go on forever. Destruction is always a criticism of life; and it's not always from the standpoint of the destroyed that we read that criticism. This is a cruel truth, but it must be said. We must realize that our efforts in some sense are always absurd. But I like the heroism of this absurdity.

Sanders: *You do seem to be skeptical about the moral value of literature.*

Konrád: Not really; not altogether. On the door of a Budapest church a simple-minded little priest put up this sign: "Spend a half hour with your soul." I liked to go into this church and sit around for a half hour, which I felt I did spend with my soul. If somebody reads, he is in a better state of mind than if he is jostled on the subway. He may have a moment of self-discovery. If the light the author sheds on his own self is strong enough, it may illuminate his reader's mind. A concentrated, terrible, and serene moment is what literature really is. There are systems of morality that divide humanity into groups, approving the values of one group and rejecting those of others. Good literature never does this; it sticks up for humankind as well as for the individual human being. It voices, in other words, the morality of understanding.

The Road of the Intellectuals to Class Power: A Sociological Study of the Intelligentsia in Socialism by George Konrád and Iván Szelényi

(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; $10)

Marx held that the industrial nations of his time showed the other nations of the world their future; reversing direction, it may be that the East European intelligentsia now show the intelligentsia of the West what is in store for them. Despite the repression to which intellectuals are currently subjected, the Hungarian sociologist George Konrád and Iván Szelényi hold that East European intellectuals are a nascent dominant class. Clearly, *samizdat* such as this study imply that important sections of East European intellectuals no longer believe their society is "socialist."

The authors' critique of New Class intellectuals differs from that spawned by neoconservatism because it is based on a socialist libertarianism which, far from surrendering Marx, pledges fealty to him. Despite this avowal, the authors' socialist libertarianism owes less to Marx's view of intellectuals than to Bakunin's. Bakunin insisted that education could become the basis of a new elite, and warned about the dangers of Marx's state-dominated socialism, which in expanding the powers of the state also advanced the careers of the educated. Current discussion of New Class intellectuals may—I think correctly—be read as showing that it was not Marx but his adversary, Bakunin, who was right on these central issues. Oddly, however, Konrád and Szelényi are at pains to insist on their Marxism, but make no reference at all to Bakunin, although they more fundamentally converge with his diagnosis than with Marx's. This may be because East European culture largely censors all social theory except the lifeless ghetto Marxism allowed there.

Under the sway of this ghetto Marxism, the authors try to show that East European intellectuals will (or already) control the social "surplus," and that intellectuals there are a true "class"—and not just some lesser type of social stratum—on the Marxist assumption that only socioeconomic classes can be true power centers. In consequence of the Marxism with which they had been culturally surrounded in Hungary, their analysis depends on the unexamined idea of a "surplus," which is treated as something in being prior to its distribution, as first accumulated and only later distributed. For similar reasons, they argue that intellectuals favor systems for the "rational redistribution" of the social surplus, without explaining what

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is rational about that system in Eastern Europe, apparently assuming that any system of bureaucratic redistribution must always be more rational than a market or traditional system of distribution. (Yet was Stalinism's system of redistribution "rational"?) As a result of their immersion in ghetto Marxism, they never undertake a close analysis of just what bothers intellectuals about traditional or market systems of distribution, of the distinct character of intellectuals' knowledge, and of the special culture in which it is embedded.

While the authors recognize that not all forms of knowledge qualify to constitute an intelligentsia, and many are shared with parents, craftsmen, or police bureaucrats, they never clarify the special nature of intellectuals' knowledge except to suggest that it is "cross-contextual." This is a notion I share, but it requires examination and development rather than simple application.

From my perspective, it is not knowledge but how knowledge is produced, and therefore what knowledge is taken to be, that distinguishes intellectuals and establishes them as a speech community. Intellectuals' "knowledge" consists of those beliefs and claims justified in discourse among imputed equals. In this special discourse, justification cannot proceed by referring to the social position of those speaking, nor to ancient tradition, nor to current common sense, nor even to the utility of what is claimed. Since this discourse refuses to credit the speech even of the high and mighty, insisting that their speech, too, be justified by reasons given rather than by the speaker's social position, this is a grammar of rationality that, as Nietzsche noted, "favors the plebes" and is threatening to any other system of privilege. It is precisely intellectuals' grammar of rationality that helps explain their "adversary" politics in modern and not-so-modern times. The epistemology and politics of intellectuals are intimately linked.

How do Szelényi and Konrád account for the alienation of intellectuals? Their core argument is that Eastern European societies were characterized by special historical circumstances that allowed their intelligentsia to play a special role there. Indeed, much the best part of their discussion is the stage-by-stage account of the historical formation of the intelligentsia, its relation to other elites and to the state in the old absolutist empire, or to the new state party of collectivist society.

The conceptual center of their historical account is Marx's notion of the "Asiatic Mode of Production" (AMP), in which the state was able to dominate society because it controlled irrigation systems, particularly in arid environments where they were central to the mode of production. In the AMP the state's control over irrigation enabled it to command the society and stunt all other classes, stagnating economic development. Now there are two ways in which one can use the notion of the AMP. One is as an "ideal type," which concrete societies can more or less approximate. The second approach treats irrigation as a metaphor and asks, what is there about the AMP that is important; asks, in effect, what is its "essence"? Happily Konrád and Szelényi have taken the latter, more sophisticated course. Konrád and Szelényi use the notion of the AMP metaphorically to argue that the state in East Europe after the 12th century became dominant, not because it controlled irrigation, but because it monopolized other societal needs, making itself the instrument for coping with the pressure of surrounding military empires.

Until the 12th century, the authors maintain, East Europe differed from the West primarily because it was poorer. Later, under Tartar and Turkish pressure, East Europe and especially Moscow's rulers developed large standing armies, bureaucracies, and a dependent "service nobility" which crippled proprietary classes, whether nobility or peasantry, and subsequently stunted the development of the local bourgeoisie. It was this structural weakness of East European societies that enabled their intelligentsia to play a major role in revolutionary change, for the proprietary classes that might normally resist or co-opt them were weaker than their counterparts in the West.

Yet what led intellectuals to seize the opportunity thus presented, according to the authors, were the declining career opportunities of a group that had expected advancement. They thus refer to the blocked careers of the "non-nobles who would rise to higher parts in the state service only in exceptional cases." Given the slow development of capitalism in East Europe, "the production of intellectuals constantly ran ahead of economic growth. . . . Thus it was easy for educated professionals to become intellectual proletarians." Unable to market their skills in the private

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How We Lived:
A Documentary History of Immigrant Jews in America, 1880-1930
by Irving Howe and Kenneth Libo

(Richard Marek; $22.50)

The firsthand accounts and the photographs in this collection bring into sharp focus various aspects of life among the immigrant Jews in America. The conflicts between old and new described in Irving Howe's *World of Our Fathers* are acted out here in telling incidents of daily life: fathers are appalled when their sons play baseball instead of studying Hebrew; rabbis beseech passers-by to come into the synagogue to fill the prayer quota of 10 men; a daughter recalls persuading her mother to uncover her head for the first time in her married life. Although thanks to *World of Our Fathers* the experience evoked here is familiar, the treatment is nonetheless fresh and remarkably unsentimental.

Hester Street, 1898. New York Historical Society.

economy, intellectuals had no choice but to settle for minor state jobs which frustrated their ambitions and led them to "thirst" after power.

Yet these disappointments of course scarcely threatened them with hunger. Why, then, should they have produced such a powerful revolutionary response among the intelligentsia? One consideration seems to be that intellectuals were outraged at their blocked careers because they felt that their own exalted sense of historic mission and cultural value was being violated.

Yet this structural accounting for intellectuals' alienation still seems inadequate, especially if we remember that this alienation was manifested in East Europe even by the early intelligentsia among the nobility and by lesser gentry who had privileged careers. Konrád and Szelényi thus observe that "material interests alone do not suffice to explain why it was precisely that nobility that produced East Europe's first great movement of the intelligentsia, and its first critical, Western-oriented reform generation. . . ." Why, then, did this aristocratic intelligentsia take "the part of the people" and act as its tribune? The authors propose rather unconvincingly that they did so because "they formed the only possible opposition to coalition of emperor and aristocracy" and sought a class with which to ally themselves to make a democratic revolution. But this presumes the prior existence of the very alienation that needs to be explained.

An alternative account would stress the significance of the aristocratic intelligentsia's post-Napoleonic contact with Western Enlightenment culture through reading, study, and travel which led them, as it led their Western counterparts, to initiate that unending criticism from which, as Kant noted, nothing was exempt. In part, then, it was contact with Enlightenment culture—not simply career curbs—that transformed a section of the aristocracy into an intelligentsia, and from which they assimilated the culture of critical discourse that enabled it to develop distance from conventional social hierarchies and traditional culture.

It is this conjunction of intellectuals' culture of criticism with their relatively privileged position and high ambitions for themselves that accounts for their characteristic ambivalence toward the status quo. Most intellectuals, most of the time, are peaceful people who accommodate to their society as it is. Yet a significant minority of intellectuals, whose political and social importance goes well beyond their numbers, are often in endemic opposition to their society's master institutions. This tension between intellectuals' critical culture and their relative privilege generates "ideology," which embodies an effort to compromise their universal rationality with their special, vested interests.

Neoconservatives such as Irving Kristol and Daniel Moynihan accent intellectuals' "adversary" character, greatly overemphasizing their radicalization and vastly underestimating their peaceful inclinations. Moved by immigrant gratitude for American opportunity, the neoconservatives become watchdogs of the status quo, barking alarm at every rustle of "class betrayal" by intellectuals.

A different set of critics of New Class intellectuals, perhaps epitomized by Noam Chomsky, take up positions on the left. Adopting a Marcusean view that sees the present as incapable of generating genuine and effective criticism of itself, they downplay the obvious existence of alienation among

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Learning English at the Cooper Union. Museum of the City of New York.

Garter makers, 1910. Photo by Lewis Hine. Library of Congress.

Women on strike. Photo by George Bain. Library of Congress.

intellectuals. Characterizing this as "feigned," as only a liberal mask for the corporate elite, they contend that radicalized intellectuals are, at bottom, "servants of power." This, however, fails to provide any understanding of how they themselves were able to escape this fate and to generate what we must suppose they believe to be an authentic, radical critique of the present. In like manner, neoconservative critics of the adversary impulse of New Class intellectuals fail to explain how they (the neoconservatives) escaped this impulse and could remain loyal to the status quo. If neoconservatives gloss over the manner in which intellectuals' adversary character is commonly curbed by their privilege, radical critics of the New Class often censor the fact that this pacification is not peculiar to intellectuals; for most classes accommodate to the status quo most of the time, especially if they are privileged.

Konrád's and Szelényi's sociology of intellectuals is valuable precisely because it is neither that of the neoconservatives nor a moralizing critique from the left that holds that because some intellectuals are watchdogs of the system, all are. Above all, Konrád and Szelényi understand that intellectuals are not simply ideologues of another class, but adopt ideologies that also further their own distinct interests, often, as the authors correctly fear, at peril to the interests of the working class.

Most sociology includes bureaucrats within the category of intellectuals, with the major consequence that in East European societies today—here and now, and not in some later evolution—intellectuals are viewed as the class *already in power*. If bureaucrats are intellectuals, Konrád and Szelényi are right: intellectuals in East Europe are indeed now in power. This tends to be very much the tack they take, which leads them to define police inspectors as intellectuals and to see differences between intellectuals and bureaucrats as an internecine struggle within the intelligentsia.

Certainly both bureaucrats and intellectuals become more important as the old proprietary classes wane. If intellectuals and bureaucrats thus have this in common, there are other important ways in which they differ. Basically, bureaucrats are agents. That is, they are systematically trained to obey decisions even if not personally convinced by prior participation in opinion-shaping discussion. Intellectuals, however, see themselves not as agents, but as principals, pursuing projects that they have initiated or in which they see some value.

The older bureaucratic officialdom and the newer technocratic intelligentsia live cheek by jowl, but they respond to different imperatives. While bureaucrats commonly expect to achieve their aims by ordering what they desire or forbidding what they dislike, and by imposing costs on those resisting, the technical intelligentsia prefers systems of material incentives with which to reward compliance, as well as systems of indoctrination or education to encourage it.

Yet we would not want to overstate the differences. If technocrats seem like learned men in comparison to bureaucrats, the former usually operate within the paradigms of their sciences and technologies, often with as little critical reflection as bureaucrats applying rules to the clientele. Indeed, Thomas Kuhn has argued that the triumph of "normal science" implies the end of critical reflection. Nonetheless, those

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committed to scientific paradigms may encounter anomalous findings, or be challenged by new competing paradigms. At this point, technocrats, professionals, and scientists must refurbish the critical culture they may have allowed to recede.

Moreover, the role of a critical culture is not confined to the work lives of scientists and technocrats; and when limited or repressed there it is often in evidence in their personal lives. In short, professional technocrats may also be amateur humanistic intellectuals. Szelényi and Konrád thus observe that

> in their free time the technocrats are . . . intellectuals; they go out on the day of publication to buy the books which a latent literary opinion recommends even when official critics condemn them; they are regular concert-goers demanding classical and modern music alike. . . . They organize exhibitions of avant-garde artists . . . are themselves amateur artists, ethnographers, or philosophers, and they find it unnatural if the creators and innovators they admire most are not permitted to create.

Suspension of critical discourse in the professions, then, does not mean its destruction and, in an archeological view, even the narrow technocrats may remain grounded in the critical culture of the Enlightenment. Szelényi and Konrád thus indicate that there is a tendency for technocrats in East Europe to serve as a protective umbrella for more outspokenly critical intellectuals, and that networks of affinity and alliance develop among them.

Konrád and Szelényi argue that it is only now that the technocrats have any chance of dislodging the party elite in Eastern Europe; they are thus the group on which the class leadership and organization of intellectuals will come to center. This judgment, which I have long shared, is sharply at variance with the prognosis of the Frankfurt School of critical theory—and perhaps most especially Jürgen Habermas—which views the intelligentsia as if it had only technical, scientific interests but no class interests or ideological morality of its own. It may be that the emerging New Citizens party, and its new effort to rally a following around the ecologist Barry Commoner, signal that this stage in the formation of intellectuals as a class has begun even in the United States.

Alvin W. Gouldner

Alvin W. Gouldner is Max Weber Research Professor of Social Theory at Washington University, St. Louis, and has recently completed a trilogy, the second volume of which is *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (Seabury Press).

American Characteristics and Other Essays by Thornton Wilder edited by Donald Gallup with a foreword by Isabel Wilder

(Harper & Row; $14.95)

When Thornton Wilder died in 1975 at the age of 78, he was best known as a novelist and playwright. After all, he had won Pultizer Prizes in both fields early in life—for *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* at 30, and for *Our Town* 10 years later—and kept right on going with *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1942), *The Matchmaker* (1954), *The Eighth Day* (a National Book Award winner in 1967), and *Theophilus North* (1973). Yet, perhaps surprisingly, the creator of *Our Town* (who can forget that nostalgic picture of small town life?) was also an able literary scholar, something of an expert on the modern period, who recorded his thoughts in enough articles and essays to fill a respectable volume.

During the same years that produced *Our Town*, Wilder made his living as an English teacher, first at New Jersey's Lawrenceville Prep, and later at the University of Chicago. And Wilder wasn't just putting in time—he cared about students and worked hard to make the University of Chicago the thriving center for the study of literature it was in the 1930s. Wilder himself enjoyed touring the country to lecture on a wide assortment of literary and philosophical topics. When the success of *Our Town* convinced him he could make a living as a dramatist, he gave up teaching but continued to lecture (the actor in him loved standing up in front of a crowd) and to study and write about the works of his favorite authors, primarily Goethe, Joyce, Gertrude Stein, and the Spanish playwright Lope de Vega.

In *American Characteristics and Other Essays* Donald Gallup has collected just about all the documents of Wilder's scholarly self, lecture notes, brief articles and introductions written between 1930 and 1960, plus a charming foreword by Wilder's sister, Isabel, which places each of the pieces in Wilder's personal history. It would be safe to say that Wilder never intended these essays to be collected—there is much repetition of ideas, even of passages, from one essay to the next. Several of the never-before-published essays might best have been left that way (these reveal Wilder's confessed difficulty in "putting down one declarative sentence after another" in stilted or scatter-shot organization). And, to get the carping over with, Wilder's "big" ideas are few, and derived mainly from his reading of Gertrude Stein and the classics. But what the essays do offer—and this should not be dismissed—is a personal view of literature from a writer whose intuitive understanding of human nature supports all his great works, whether dramatic, fictive, or critical.

First, the ideas. The three essays on "American Characteristics," taken from Wilder's 1950 Norton lectures on Melville, Thoreau, and Emily Dickinson, set out most of the themes that appear in the rest of the volume. Wilder's effort here is to define American literary classics which, he says, can only be understood as the works of the prototypical American, the loner. Wilder's American has retained the separatist spirit that brought the first colonies from Europe: he is a "nomad in relation to place, disattached in relation to time, lonely in relation to society and insubmissive to circumstance, destiny, or God." (Sweeping statements like this are Wilder's strong suit; he rarely crosses the line from eloquence to bombast.)

The American isolation, says Wilder, fuels a creative spirit. Because he is disattached, lonely, and insubmissive, the American cannot define himself, as the European does, by his neighbor-

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hood, the things and people around him. (Readers of Gertrude Stein will recognize her imprint here.) But this prototypical American will discover the need to "invent what it is to be an American" in writing, painting, music. These twin impulses, to separate and to create, are what took Thoreau to Walden and Melville to sea—and made them write.

But most important to Wilder is the kind of creativity the American character engenders. In writing, for example, the rootless American will be much less concerned with scene-setting and characterization than with the larger questions of epistemology and ontology. Thoreau went to Walden not

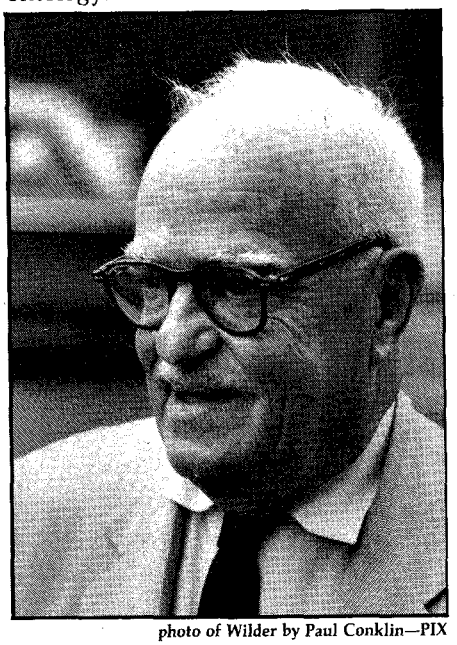

photo of Wilder by Paul Conklin—PIX

to write a nature study but to, in his words, "meet the facts of life." And Melville managed to transform a sailor's yarn into an epic confrontation between good and evil, innocence and experience, meaning and meaninglessness. Even house-bound Emily Dickinson managed, in her verse, to "love the particular while living in the universal."

Of course Wilder would find the theater ideally suited to presenting the larger truths, the particular universalized, and his essays on drama mainly explore this idea. "Each actor before us is indubitably a living, breathing 'one'; yet [a play] tends and strains to exhibit a general truth," he writes in the introduction to his own *Three Plays*. And it is astonishing to discover just how much *Our Town* is rooted in theory: Wilder's notions of the lonely, self-inventing American and of the truth-telling capacity of the theater come together in *Our Town*. His famous innovations—eliminating props, simplifying stage sets and costuming—were all intended to emphasize the universal, enduring aspects of a particular American family, as he says, "to find a value above all price for the smallest events in our daily life."

But what is best about these essays is not Wilder's theory of drama, nor his notion of the American loner—an outmoded ideal sustained these days mostly by graduate students and politicians. Wilder's gift, ironically, is not for naming universals, but for understanding the *particular* problems of the authors he studied—problems which, not accidentally, mirror his own.

Thornton Wilder was the second son of a newspaper-editor-turned-diplomat, and spent his boyhood between homes and boarding schools in Wisconsin, China, and California. On top of this rather traumatic childhood, Thornton must have been haunted by the recollection of his identical twin brother who died at birth. Thornton's father Amos was, by all accounts, a tyrant, reappearing after stays in the Far East to demand recitations of homework assignments from his children. He was dead set against Thornton's writing career and secured the Lawrenceville teaching job for him in an effort to head it off. In fact, Amos Wilder decided everything for his son, not just his first job, but which colleges to attend, what countries to travel to, everything. When his father died in Thornton's 39th year, the son confided to close friends that he was more than a little relieved.

Small wonder, considering this domineering father, that young Thornton was something of a mama's boy. His mother, after all, provided the cheesecloth costumes for Thorntie's early dramatic projects with his brothers and sisters, and scrimped to send her son to the theater. After his father's death, Thornton built a large house in Connecticut for his mother and unmarried sister Isabel which he shared with them as a bachelor for the rest of his life.

Wilder is at his best when writing about familiar subjects: because it draws on his firsthand knowledge of single women and dominated children, his essay on Emily Dickinson is the most insightful of the collection. Wilder acknowledges the traditional explanation for Dickinson's homely verse style—the protestant hymn stanza—but goes deeper. He claims Emily never outgrew a need to attract her emotionally distant father's attention (a father whose soul she described as "pure and terrible") with clever remarks which quite early took the form of coy verses. But the best of her verses are, of course,

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not merely coy. They contain something "terrible" of their own, among other things, an obsession with death that "confirms a sense of how deep a wound she received [from her father]." The countless poems on mourning and loss disguise her longing for other people to die in retaliation for what she had suffered.

Wilder also takes us into the private lives of Thoreau, Stein, and George Bernard Shaw—all writers who "have spent their childhood under a senseless and immitigable tyranny." Stein's life was closest to Wilder's: she too had lost a twin at birth, and suffered under a dominating father and older brother. Wilder also writes convincingly of Thoreau's failure at finding a true friend and lover. Although Shaw experienced political rather than familial tyranny (growing up in a repressive Ireland), Wilder clearly identified with the problem it brought on Shaw: a ruinous need to please audiences with his work rather than himself.

Wilder's obsession with the parental relation extends beyond the biographical passages even into the theoretical ones. Again and again his theories are phrased in terms of the family, as when explaining the loner in "American Characteristics" he writes: "In America the family is the nexus of an unusually powerful ambivalence. On the one hand the child strains to break away and lead his own life. On the other hand [he] is exceptionally aware of the multitude of the human race." He goes on to talk about the child's loneliness in the face of this choice. Wilder next turns fierce in "Culture in a Democracy" as he denounces his father in what he terms the "Feudal Fiction" which he believed infected all literature of the past: "God was a King and a Father; so all kings and fathers participated—by metaphor—in an element of divinity. God was above; and kings and fathers were above—and everybody else was *low*." This is the tormented son speaking. Even the most abstract statements—"Didacticism is an attempt at the coercion of another's free mind even though one knows that in these matters beyond logic, beauty is the only persuasion"—recalls the Wilder family triangle. The father who constantly made extra homework for his children is coercing Didacticism; and the more sensitive mother who encouraged Thornton's artistic efforts from the start is Beauty.

The reader of *American Characteristics* will find much that is missing from many a more considered volume of criticism. There is the refreshing straightforwardness of the creative artist considering his craft: in the midst of disquisition on the style of *Finnegans Wake*, Wilder asks, "do all books henceforward have to be written like this?" There is the smart aleck humor of the playwright taking potshots at his colleagues: on the derivative Shaw, "he could only think by ricochet." And there is the eloquence we recognize as the novelist's: on the letters of Madame de Sévigné, "Time after time the letter rises beyond the understanding of the daughter and becomes an *aria* where the overloaded heart sings to itself for the sheer comfort of its felicity, sings perhaps to the daughter she might have been." But above all we get to know Thornton Wilder, the loner who spent his childhood hither and yon, who never did find his mate, but who still managed to break out of his loneliness by recognizing his kinship with other great American writers with whom, through this book, he takes his place.

Megan Marshall

Megan Marshall is a Boston writer.

Edward Hopper as Illustrator
by Gail Levin

(Norton, in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art; $24.95)

Edward Hopper: the Complete Prints
by Gail Levin

(Norton, in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art; $15.95)

Although I knew him for many years, Edward Hopper was an enigma to me, and so was his art. I admired the skill with which he composed his paintings, their accuracy of perspective, their aptness of detail. He posed for me, we visited one another, but still I did not really get to know him. We talked about art in general but seldom about his own work. I did not even know that he had been an illustrator.

Illustration has to be clear, accurate, believable. An illustrator has to have knowledge of the human figure, its movements and gestures, its facial expressions. He has to be able to place his characters in their particular environment. It is a demanding kind of art, almost a lost art in our day. On this point, Gail Levin quotes Norman Rockwell: "You've got to be obvious. You've got to please both the art editor and the public. This makes it tough on the illustrator as compared to the fine artist, who can paint an object any way he happens to interpret it." In other words, the illustrator acquires a kind of skill which the so-called fine artist does not possess. In the paintings of Hopper there is evidence of that particular skill. The exhibition at the Whitney Museum, and these two books by Gail Levin, reveal Hopper as a competent illustrator. But although they do have an element of narration, his best paintings of the 1920s and 1930s transcend illustration.

There is something in Hopper the illustrator that sets him apart not only from people like N. C. Wyeth, Maxfield Parrish, Arthur Keller, but even from such contemporaries as Sloan, Glackens, and Shinn, all of whom also pictured city life. Gail Levin perceptively describes this as "a cool detachment reflecting the reserve with which he dealt with the world around him."

Hopper the illustrator is also different from Hopper the painter. In his paintings one finds a personal mood, a subjective quality usually inconsistent with illustrations. "The difference, of course," Gail Levin says, "is that the illustrator must complement the word of the author, while for the narrative painter the only story is the one he chooses to reveal in the painting itself." And then she continues: "Hopper's paintings are usually evocative of a certain mood and often do seem to convey events isolated from an unknown narrative." One of Miss Levin's important discoveries is that the themes of Hopper's illustrations forecast his

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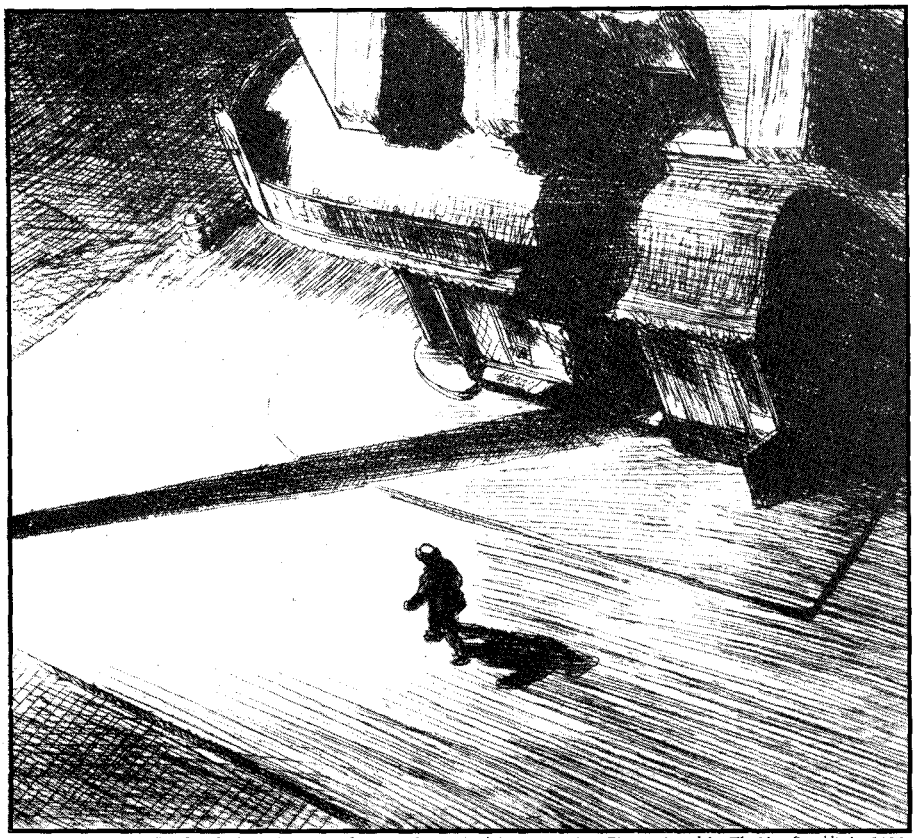

"Night Shadows," 1921. Whitney Museum of American Art. First printed in *The New Republic* in 1924.

future paintings. Some of his illustrations for restaurants, offices, theaters later became the themes of "The Automat," "Chop Suey," "Tables for Ladies," "Two on the Aisle," etc.

Miss Levin's research, painstaking and commendable though it is, sometimes leads to far-fetched comparisons and conclusions. We learn from this book that Hopper became aware of French art as a student of Robert Henri and later, in Paris, admired and may have been influenced by it. But the comparison of Hopper's illustrations to some of the famous French paintings is inapt. That one of his illustrations has a suggestion of a picture on a wall does not make it comparable to a painting by Dégas. Nor can an illustration for *Hotel Management*, a restaurant scene, be compared to Renoir's masterpiece, "The Luncheon of the Boating Party."

Mis Levin's second volume deals with the etchings in which Hopper became interested through his acquaintance with Martin Lewis, a professional etcher. Again, as in her book on his illustrations, in her book on his prints Miss Levin furnishes a meticulously researched description and comparision of almost every etching Hopper made. And again some of the comparisons are stretched. His best etchings are very well known—"Evening Wind," "American Landscape," "Night Shadow," "East Side Interior." They are stark and create the same feeling of aloneness as some of his paintings. Technically harsh, they lack the skillfull cross-hatching of Sloan's etchings. If comparisons are in order I would put them beside the etchings of another painter who also expressed loneliness in his art, the Norwegian Edvard Munch.

These two books by Gail Levin (coupled with a future third volume on his paintings and drawings) will create a complete image of Edward Hopper the man, painter, illustrator, and graphic artist. From his beginning as an illustrator and then as an etcher and painter one can trace the consistency, the integrity of his nature, revealed in all the phases of his work. To quote Hopper himself:

> In every artist's development the germ of the later work is always found in the earlier. The nucleus around which the artist's intellect builds his work is himself: the central ego, personality or whatever it may be called, and this changes little from birth to death. What he once was he always is, with slight modification. Changing fashions in methods or subject matter alter him little or not at all.

This era with all its restless fashions in art has changed Hopper "not at all."

Raphael Soyer

Raphael Soyer is the author of *The Diary of an Artist* (New Republic Books). An exhibition of his work is on display at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC, through January 20, 1980.

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Deferred	2,792,809	1,909,150
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Realized investment gains (losses)	(120,433)	11,364
Net income	7,354,054	4,878,866
Earnings per share		
Income before realized investment gains (losses)	4.35	2.88
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A Victorian Courtship: The Story of Beatrice Potter and Sidney Webb by Jeanne MacKenzie

(Oxford University Press; $10.95)

This fascinating little book, told almost entirely through contemporary diaries and letters, is a love story of a kind and a study in character; not least, a faithful vignette of a period. How articulate the late Victorians were! How fluently their neat Waterman pens raced over the thick, crinkly writing paper, analyzing their souls and their sense of purpose, pouring forth their ambitions, setting out in enormous detail the pros and cons of the moral dilemmas they set themselves—and yet leaving out so much of their real feelings, buttoned up tightly behind the fine silk blouses and thick worsted frock coats!

Beatrice Potter was one of nine daughters of a rich railway promoter, brought up in sumptuous upper-middle-class comfort. Seven of her sisters made solid, purposeful matches; one married a failure; Beatrice, the handsomest, cleverest, and most determined, was unattached at 30. A few years before, she had met and fallen in love with Joe Chamberlain, then (the mid-1880s), the most formidable politician in Britain, not excluding Gladstone. Chamberlain was not yet 50 but had outlived two wives, acquiring various children in the process, and was looking for a third. He never exactly proposed to Beatrice but it is clear that she powerfully appealed to him, both as a sexual and as a political animal, and that she certainly could have married him had she wished.

Jeanne MacKenzie makes it clear that Beatrice effectively ended the relationship because she was terrified of Chamberlain's force and feared that, in marriage, her personality would be completely crushed beneath his. No doubt this was what Beatrice herself believed, and the view was endorsed by her relations, who looked down their noses at Chamberlain's upstart origins and opinions. My guess is that Chamberlain did not wish to dominate Beatrice—recognized it would be impossible anyway—and would have settled for an equal and dynamic partnership. Married to Beatrice, indeed, he might have followed the radical side of his political nature, gone all out for social welfare instead of swinging to imperialism, and so changed the course of English history. But Beatrice did not want an equal partnership; like Queen Elizabeth, she was determined "there should be but one mistress and no master." Chamberlain, despite his tremendous appeal to her, was not malleable material; and unless she could meet a man she could mold, she preferred spinsterhood.

Sidney Webb was a humble Cockney who had "bettered himself," becoming a civil servant and Fabian Society guru by prodigies of industry and sacrifice. Beatrice's diary records her mingled disgust and interest on first meeting him:

> A remarkable little man with a huge head on a very tiny body . . . somewhat unkempt, spectacles and a bourgeois black coat shiny with wear; somewhat between a London card and a German professor. His pronunciation is Cockney, his Hs are shaky, his attitudes by no means elegant—with his thumbs fixed pugnaciously in a far from immaculate waistcoat . . . and with an expression of inexhaustible self-complacency. . . . His tiny tadpole body, unhealthy skin, lack of manner, Cockney pronunciation, poverty, all are against him. This self-complacent egotism, this disproportionate view of his own position is at once repulsive and ludicrous. . . . A London retail tradesman with the aims of a Napoleon!

But she also noted: "he can learn," and she thought this "queer monstrosity" could be "justified by success." Moreover, Webb fell hopelessly and abjectly in love with her, and was prepared to maintain a relationship, romantic if possible, solely intellectual if need be, on any terms she cared to lay down. With gracious condescension, Beatrice agreed.

The ups and downs of this relationship form the substance of this book. It was a struggle of wills. Webb had enormous mole-like persistence, no shame or pride, an inexhaustible capacity for absorbing snubs, insults, and rebukes. He won in the end, married the beauty and got £1000 a year to boot, an enormous sum by his standards. Beatrice, in the meantime, exacted her pound of flesh:

> I have been longing to warn you not to talk to people in general about the way in which you are edging your way into different organisations. . . .You ought to be very grateful for this letter, and value it as a mark of confidence. . . . If you value the continuance of our friendship, exercise a little more self-control—and occasionally think of me, and of my comfort . . . look after the breadth of the English vowel! Do not refuse to recognise the individual existence of 'er', 'ir', 'ow', 'a', and confound them all in a common 'er'. . . . However old your coat may be (and that is of no importance) brush it. Take care of your voice pronunciation: it is the chief instrument of influence. Don't talk of 'when I am Prime Minister'—it jars on sensitive ears.

Beatrice Potter and Sidney Webb at the time of their marriage in 1892.

Aspects of Sidney continued to jar on Beatrice's sensitivity and it seems highly unlikely that she ever conceived a particle of passion for her "tadpole." On the other hand, as a business proposition their marriage, which lasted half a century and ended only in death, must be rated a success. They had many useful characteristics in common, including a total absence of a sense of humor, and a voracious appetite for dull volumes. Many, including Wells,

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sneered at their marriage at the time, and Malcolm Muggeridge has covered it in ridicule since. It produced no children, but was not unfruitful in other ways: the Webbs founded the *New Statesman* and the London School of Economics, and wrote innumerable books. Sidney became a cabinet minister and a peer, the first of the coroneted Cockneys. Beatrice pushed forward and sponsored clever young men by the score—bullied them too, of course. To the end, she remained a patrician beauty, he the archetype of snuffling insignificance. Jeanne MacKenzie casts a penetrating and beautifully controlled searchlight into the origins of their brisk marital compact, and in doing so tells a surprisingly touching tale.

Paul Johnson

Paul Johnson was formerly the editor of the *New Statesman*.

Brief Reviews

Counsel for the Defense: The Autobiography of Paul O'Dwyer

(Simon & Schuster; $10.95)

The often defeated Paul O'Dwyer may not be the model for a progressive politician, but this is a model political autobiography. In a terse 281 pages—without sentimentality, bitterness, self-righteousness, or evidence of the ministrations of a ghost-writer—Paul O'Dwyer tells the story of his youth in Ireland and his more than 50 years' involvement in the politics and social struggles of New York City.

For decades, no cause has been too lost for Paul O'Dwyer to volunteer his services as an attorney. He has represented—often for free—labor organizers, civil rights activists, peace activists, and people accused of running guns to British-occupied Palestine and British-occupied Northern Ireland. But whether O'Dwyer clients have been sympathizers of the Irgun, the Irish Republican Army, or movements closer to home, he has remained true to the rebellious heritage of his schoolteacher parents, in County Mayo, who organized the first teachers union in Ireland and spoke up for independence from Great Britain.

The O'Dwyer saga, with its interplay between loyalty and rebelliousness, contains the raw material of a novel. More than O'Dwyer admits, it is largely the story of two brothers. Paul's older brother, William, rebelled against the family and came to America, where he stopped rebelling and became a loyal organization Democrat, a successful lawyer, Brooklyn district attorney, and mayor of New York. When the Kefauver Senate Investigating Committee uncovered evidence of alleged corruption in Mayor O'Dwyer's administration, he resigned and accepted a hasty appointment as President Truman's ambassador to Mexico.

Paul O'Dwyer remained loyal to the family—even to Bill O'Dwyer, whose reputation he still defends—but saved his rebelliousness for the outside world. Coming to America years after his older brother, and with the family's blessing, Paul O'Dwyer became a lawyer too—but a lawyer for unions and for progressive causes—and a political leader, too, but in the left wing of the Democratic party.

Although their careers took different paths, Paul O'Dwyer never entirely emerged from his older brother's shadow until William's death in 1964. Being the mayor's brother meant that Paul enjoyed access to regular Democratic circles—and incurred some suspicion among purist "reform" Democrats. More important, the example of his older brother may have compelled Paul O'Dwyer in his constant, and almost always unsuccessful, pursuit of public office.

O'Dwyer was at his most dignified in his legal career. He fought for an honorable array of causes and clients—most notably, blacks seeking to integrate New York City housing during the 1940s; victims of the disloyalty hunts of the 1950s; civil rights workers in the South during the 1960s; and, in 1971 and 1972, the "Harrisburg Seven," antiwar activists, including the Berrigans, who were acquitted of bizarre charges, such as a purported conspiracy to kidnap Henry Kissinger. As an attorney, O'Dwyer helped win scores of cases whose time hadn't yet come.

Distinguished as a lawyer, O'Dwyer was less successful as a politician. Seldom surviving the primaries or nominating conventions, he ran once for mayor, twice for Congress, and four times for United States senator. His most creditable political venture was also his most quixotic—his 1968 challenge to Senator Jacob Javits.

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O'Dwyer ran less to win than to raise the standard of the antiwar movement, and he emerged as the aging hero of a new generation of young activists.

In 1973, with the support of regular party leaders, O'Dwyer was elected president of the New York City Council—a largely ceremonial post which he held until 1977, when he was defeated in his bid for reelection by Carol Bellamy. He assumed office in 1974 at the onset of the New York City fiscal crisis—a year when the office of mayor became largely ceremonial. In the process of reorganizing the city's finances, New York City's bankers and business leaders usurped the role of the elected public officials and dictated closings of public hospitals, day care centers, and schools, cutbacks in other public services, and wage freezes and layoffs for city employees. For once, the tribune of the left, Paul O'Dwyer, was unable to lead an opposition movement against regressive policies, and, as he writes, with characteristic honesty, "My last exercise of public office was scarcely an exercise at all."

David Kusnet

David Kusnet's articles and reviews have appeared in the *Nation*, the *New Leader*, *Dissent*, and *Democratic Left*.

ACORN, YOM KIPPUR

—October 1, 1979

Look at this little fallen thing, it's got
Its yarmulka still on, and a jaunty sprig
of twig, a feather in its cap, and in its head
There is a single-minded thought: *White Oak.*

Language and thought have changed since I was young
And we used to say it had an oak inside,
The way some tribes believe that every man
Has a homunculus inside his head;
Already, though, matter was going out
And energy coming in; though energy
Wasn't the last word either, the last word
Is information, or, more tersely, The Word.
Inside its dreaming head the acorn has
Complete instructions for making an oak
Out of the sun and the local water and soil,
Not to forget the great stretches of time
Required for cracking the code, solving the script,
Translating the sacred book of the white oak
With its thousands of annual leaves and their footnotes
—Amounting to millions in a century—
Instructing the oak in the making of acorns
And so forth and so on, world without end.

What the moral of this may be I do not know.
But once a mystical lady in a dream
Beheld her Savior, an acorn in his hand,
And asking what might this be was answered thus:
"It is in a manner everything that is made."

Howard Nemerov

The Strength of Fields by James Dickey

(Doubleday; $6)

The publication of James Dickey's *Collected Poems 1957-1967* (including *Buckdancer's Choice*, which won the National Book Award in 1966) signified the end of a decade of remarkable accomplishment. Since then Dickey has published a deservedly popular novel, *Deliverance*; a book-length poem, *The Zodiac*; and now *The Strength of Fields*, a slim volume containing 30 poems, half of which are translations—here called "improvisations"—of poems by Paz, Montale, Reverdy, and others.

None of these poems compares with his best, yet readers who know and like his work will feel at home. World War II still echoes in his head and in the boot camp near his house, where his family wakes to the ominous sound of drums. Redemption through love, dumb luck, poetry, is still possible. Water, that life-threatening, life-renewing force, is pervasive, as always, in pool, river, ocean, rain, perspiration. Though there are no poems here as stunning as "Drinking From a Helmet" or "The Lifeguard," "The Voyage of the Needle," which describes the "magic" of a needle floating on surface tension, creates a magic of its own.

The poet is no longer tied to the South but has become a world citizen, writing from England, New York, Los Angeles, and (via the translations) China, Finland, Russia, etc. The first of "Three Poems with Yevtushenko" states one of Dickey's own obsessive themes: "I dreamed I already loved you. / I dreamed I already killed you." Sportsman, soldier, son, lover, father—all must live with the terrible guilt of having destroyed (or permitted to be destroyed) that which they love. Dickey continues to accept the responsibility of the survivor. In "Two Poems of Sleep-Flight" he falls asleep at the controls, but

> the compass was wrenched from its
> dream
> Of all the West. From luxurious
> Death in uncaring I swung
> East, and the deaths and nightmares
> And training of many.

If the title poem, written for the 1976 presidential inauguration, shares anything with Dickey's other work (and I think it shares little enough) it is that sense of obligation, the willingness to assume responsibility. The man (Carter, surely) walking the fields at night, prays, "My life belongs to the world. I will do what I can."

The vein of self-mockery, implicit in Dickey's earlier work, grows mordant. The poet who, in "Approaching Prayer," put on a boar's head and participated in its frightening vision, who preferred to run with the fox rather than the hounds, now shows up in "False Youth" wearing a fox cap and is made sport of by barbershop wags:

> I hear the end man say, as my own
> Hair-cutter turns my face
> To the floor, Jesus, if there's anything I
> hate
> It's a middle-aged hippie. Well, so do I, I
> swallow
> Back: so do I . . .

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For Dickey, laughter and tears are never far apart, as he says in "Small Song," subtitled "from the Hungarian of Attila Jozsef, head crushed between two boxcars—": "I'm laughing, but being very quiet about it. / I've got my pipe and my knife: / I am quiet and laughing like hell."

Jane Flanders

Jane Flanders is a Washington writer.

Correspondence, *from page 7*

agree to leave Ireland at a particular time in the future, and then to support a federated government of the two parts of Ireland, North and South, with autonomy of local government for each part, with a central government for defense and foreign affairs. This can be effected over a period of three to five years.

Once it was known that Britain had made an irrevocable commitment to leave Ireland, the Northern people would have no place to go, and ultimately would be obliged to join with the Republic in such a federation. Northern Ireland is not a viable community of itself. It exists by reason of the $15-billion yearly subsidy from Britain.

John Branigan
Staten Island, New York

Taxing oil windfalls

To the editors:

Your editorial "How to Tax Oil Companies" (*TNR*, December 22, 1979) demonstrates not only surprising ignorance of the massive dislocation of our economy caused by rapid oil price increases, but also a shocking solicitousness for the major oil companies whose hand in the run-up of world oil prices is as heavy as that of OPEC.

You argue that "the [windfall profits] tax is a sound one," on the grounds that it will "recapture for the general public billions of dollars that would otherwise go to American private individuals and corporations." At a time when, according to President Carter himself, oil companies will reap over a trillion dollars from his action to decontrol domestic crude oil prices, capturing between $178 billion (the Senate version) and $277 billion (the House version) is merely a drop in the bucket. When one considers the fact that producers invested in oil exploration and production when prices were three dollars or even $13 a barrel and never expected oil prices to increase to $30 a barrel, then one has to recognize that it is not good public policy to transfer enormous wealth from consumers to producers just because the OPEC cartel and the major oil companies have driven the price of oil through the roof.

Since in the US the cost of producing old oil is less than four dollars a barrel and new oil is no higher than eight or nine dollars a barrel, it is simply unjust and unfair to allow oil companies to keep most of the increase up to $30 a barrel. A real and effective windfall profits tax would tax away all the windfall profits and redistribute those revenues throughout the economy in a fair and equitable manner. Finally, it should be noted that there would have been no windfall in the first place if President Carter hadn't created it through decontrol, particularly at a time when OPEC was raising its prices and particularly since Carter ran for president saying he would not tie US oil prices to those set artificially high by the OPEC cartel.

Edwin Rothschild, Director
Energy Action Educational Foundation
Washington, DC

TRB defended

To the editors:

I rise to defend TRB in opposition to the criticism, "Rejected Presidents" (Correspondence, *TNR*, December 8). The letter-writer cites Fillmore, Arthur, and Andrew Johnson—none of whom was elected president—and Ulysses Grant and Theodore Roosevelt—neither of whom was an incumbent at the time he was rejected.

If Carter fails to gain his party's nomination, Franklin Pierce—elected incumbent seeking renomination and failing—will stand as his only precedent.

James K. Marugg
Pasadena, California

A place of one's own

To the editors:

"Coming Home" by Jacobo Timerman (*TNR*, December 1, 1979) is a good example of what this world needs far less of. While Timerman muses on a grand homeland, quite a few other Jews feel the threat of anti-Semitism. I think going to Israel to escape prejudice is akin to burying one's head in the sand. If some Jewish people want to define a place as being absolutely their own—and definition rather than description is what Timerman is making—fine, it is nobody else's business (as long as it remains a concept). But assigning to this place a grand part in an esoteric historical drama will only alienate the Jewish people. Jews to me are basically white people some of whom have certain characteristic traits. To imagine how these San Franciscan neighbors of mine have much to do with anything in the Middle East is not easy.

Les James
San Francisco, California

For Sale

To the editors:

Anyone who has read Roger Sale's critical study of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, his fine essays on Empson and D. H. Lawrence in *Modern Heorism*, or his measured appreciations (in his recently published *On Not Being Good Enough*) of writers as distinct from each other as Hugh Kenner, Jane Jacobs, Robert Stone, Margaret Drabble, and Bill Bradley, will resent Joyce Carol Oates's attempt to caricature him as a "hatchet-man" and a representative of "literary hack journalism" (review of *On Not Being Good Enough*, *TNR*, September 15). Readers should be notified then that what Oates calls Sale's "mildly instructive" review of her novel *Wonderland* made the observation that she was "as yet only a writer of short stories," that her novel was insufficiently selective and just plain too long. After nine years, that observation still seems true about *Wonderland* and about her novels generally. But it appears to me that these critical remarks rankled Oates, to the extent where in reviewing Sale's new book she became a hatchet-woman. Stranger things have happened.

William H. Pritchard
Amherst College
Amherst, Massachusetts

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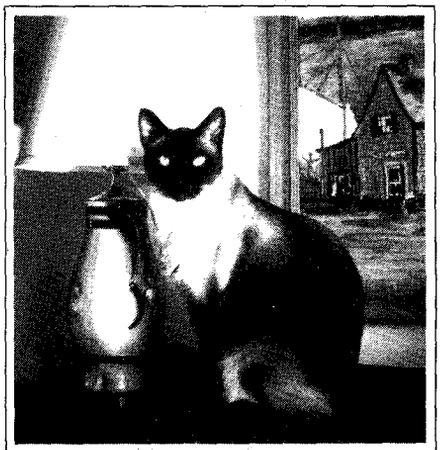

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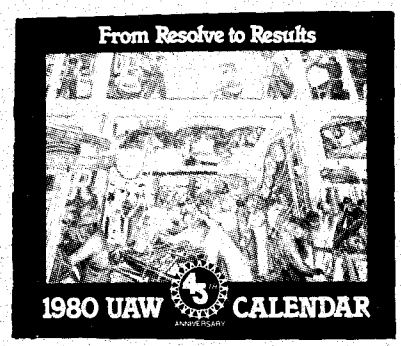

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Washington Diarist

Upper Lip

After he returned to Washington last summer from his vacation, it was apparent that Alfred Kahn had occupied his spare time by growing a mustache. He explained to reporters that he had tried everything else to stop inflation, so why not? I wholeheartedly endorse the decision, which is more than I can say about most of what Kahn has done since taking over the anti-inflation battle. Here I should note, in deference to prevailing canons of journalistic ethics, that I was three years ahead of Kahn in this respect. Now I do not grant a wholesale endorsement to all mustache-growing—in fact, among men my own age (20s) there are probably too many already. (One young woman confessed to me that she had never kissed a man *without* a mustache.) But official Washington seems to be the last frontier for whiskers, and Kahn's hirsute gesture represented something of a breakthrough. We have not had a president with a mustache since Theodore Roosevelt, though the decline of the republic since he left the White House may be only a coincidence. If nothing else, Kahn's mustache helps to combat the trend toward androgyny in American society. If you doubt the existence of such a trend, I direct you to a recent full-page ad in the *New York Times* for a new magazine called *Next*. The ad features a drawing of two adults naked to the waist and only barely distinguishable as male and female, and asks, "Is this what's next?" Says the ad, "Sex differences are diminishing. And rapidly. In fact, they're diminishing so rapidly that some believe that by the year 2000, birth certificates will no longer list biological sex. . . . [M]en will still impregnate and women will still menstruate, gestate, and lactate. But what else will endure is the question." If Alfred Kahn and I have anything to say about it, at least a couple of forlorn mustaches will endure as well. I take it as an unfavorable augury that one of the first sex symbols of the 1980s is an actress in the movie *Star Trek* who appears—no, not mustachioed—completely bald. Misery loves company, true, but as much as I miss the increasing numbers of hairs that are liberating themselves from the top of my head, I don't want *that* much company.

I spent Christmas in Texas, a place where the pursuit of lucre is held in high esteem and trades like journalism are regarded with indifference or suspicion. One or two of my friends go to some trouble to keep up with what I'm writing, and my immediate family takes a probably unjustified pride in my chosen line of work. But the majority of my fellow Texans take a different view. Most of my relatives, for example, have adopted one of two approaches. Either they tactfully avoid the subject, as if it were an unfortunate defect like a drug habit or a prison record, or else having managed to put this unpleasant information out of their minds, they ask graciously, "Now what is it you're doing up there in Washington?" (Having asked, they usually turn to my sister, who is working on a PhD in economics, and inquire when she is going to get married and provide my parents with some grandchildren.) Some people simply refuse to take my profession seriously. At one party I met a woman who pressed me, politely but insistently, about "what this is leading up to." I tried, doggedly but with no apparent success, to persuade her that a job in journalism doesn't necessarily lead up to anything. That's one of the problems with it, by Texas standards.

Readers numbed and bewildered by frightening news from Iran, Afghanistan, Rhodesia, and other troublesome places may have overlooked a news item that gives us all new reason for hope. On October 22, President Carter took the bold (one would like to say unprecedented) step of appointing a Commission for a National Agenda for the 1980s, which White House adviser Hedley Donovan called a "very formidable and ambitious undertaking." Said Donovan, who used to be editor-in-chief at Time Inc. and who now serves the president in some purposefully obscure capacity, "We're well aware that this kind of thing is not always sure-fire successful. But President Carter felt the country really suffered from a lack of vision, goals and purpose down the road." Come now, Hedley: who ever heard of a national commission that wasn't a rousing success? Thank God the rest of us can quit agonizing about defining our national agenda for the next decade and get back to worrying about electric bills and crabgrass. Connoisseurs of highmindedness should have no trouble composing the membership of the commission, which is as predictable as rheumatism: Columbia president William J. McGill; Common Cause founder John Gardner; former Pennsylvania governor William Scranton; and Bill Moyers, who I seem to recall used to be a journalist but now apparently spends all his time on weighty chores like this. The only problem now is that we'll all be held in suspense for a year while the commission ponders the direction the republic should take. What will it recommend? That we repeal the 1964 Civil Rights Act? Exterminate the nation's cat population? Take vigorous action to increase the national incidence of gonorrhea? Only time will tell.

While professional commission members are peering into the 1980s, journalists are preoccupied with interpreting the 1970s. One of the things I dread about each December is the inevitable barrage of banal articles summing up the year gone by. If I had known what was awaiting me at the end of a decade, I would have booked passage to a remote desert island for the last two weeks of 1979; as it was I had to content myself simply with avoiding newspapers and magazines (except *TNR*, which stoutly resisted the temptation). Consequently I can't offer a sampling of ridiculous things written by windbag columnists, but I'm sure people who have waded through even one of these pseudo-essays can provide their own samples. My guess is that this asinine tradition arose in response to Washington's grinding to a halt every Christmas season, which left pundits with nothing to write about. The only problem is a look back at a year or a decade doesn't give a commentator anything really worth writing about, but merely an excuse to blow a lot of smoke about changing the mood of the country and the dangers and opportunities that lie ahead. I imagine a lot of what appears in the newspaper spaces occupied by newspaper columnists is written more to fill that space than to communicate anything of pressing concern to the writer (much less to the reader). A friend of mine who recently had to fill in for a syndicated columnist told me, "It's really amazing how this gas gets produced. You sit down at the typewriter, you have nothing to say, but you still have to fill the column. And sure enough, out it comes." The tendency to write even when one has nothing to say just seems to be one of the occupational hazards of being a columnist. Readers can be grateful that it never afflicts the authors of the Washington Diarist.

S.C.

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